

**Understanding home: The case of Irish-born
return migrants from the United States,
1996-2006**

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PhD thesis

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Abstract

In this thesis, I examine the ideas of home among Irish-born return migrants who left the Republic of Ireland in the late-1980s/early-1990s for the United States, and then came back at the beginning of the 2000s. Drawing on an analysis of intensive interviews, I elucidate the ways in which my research participants articulate and use the concept of home to negotiate their (re)settlement experiences. The overarching argument of the thesis is that participants' interpretations represent an alternative to fixed, bounded and exclusionary understandings of home, without necessarily downplaying the longing for a discreet, foundational and originary home. This is important because their accounts of home begin to challenge narrow readings of locality and stable definitions of identity. Moreover, their narratives of home force researchers to address awkward questions about who belongs to particular places, and on what basis claims to membership are made.

I develop this argument throughout the thesis by analyzing participants' descriptions of (re)settlement in the old/new places they inhabit. I show that the majority of participants conventionally justify the return decision as the restoration of a settled sense of home. The actual experience of (re)settlement, however, requires many participants to redefine home upon return. The anxieties associated with the return experience means that home can be simultaneously a space of both homecoming and leavetaking, blurring distinctions between 'here' and 'there', home and away. In effect, what participants' narratives draw attention to is the often-overlooked tension between home's dual meaning: its lived and longed-for aspects. While the reality of return revises the expectations surrounding homecoming, opening out home to broader sets of connections does not necessarily mitigate the longing to belong 'at home', to anchor the elusive aspects of home. Participants' accounts of (re)settlement point towards an accommodation of both grounded and uprooted homes simultaneously: translocally lived, yet longed-for as discreetly-defined. These findings are significant, as they foreground the moored and mobile moments of home as complementary and co-existing rather than conflicting and contending. Return migrants' (re)settlement experiences offer a productive entry point into investigating this paradoxical nature of home in contemporary societies.

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Declaration of Originality

I hereby declare that this thesis has been composed entirely by me, that it is my own work, and that it has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

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xChapter 1 Introduction

1.1 Introducing the thesis

For Jennifer, attending the marriage of her first cousin in the beautiful surroundings of Ballyhannon Castle in Co Clare a few months after relocating her life from New York City to a village outside her hometown, Galway, the day was near-perfect. The sunny forecast, for once, came through. The ceremony itself touched Jennifer deeply, while the welcome that greeted her from old friends, neighbours and relatives at the wedding reception reinforced her view that coming home had been the right decision. She still missed her apartment, work colleagues and social life in New York. And chatting for hours every evening on Skype with faraway friends wasn't quite the same as spending time together. But for the moment, the warmth and connection she experienced at this reunion with her old life settled any lingering doubts she held about returning. She bathed in the feeling of being home.

But as the nuptial proceedings reached evening, the day's earlier energy and excitement faded. For one thing, the dinner menu didn't appeal to Jennifer's taste. And when everyone was seated to dine, she found herself on the verges of many debates about the housing market, politics, and upcoming sports games – subjects she felt remote from at best, and downright apathetic at worst. To make things worse, her relatives drank too much too quickly, she thought, and her son MacDarragh wasn't mixing well with the other children. Although it sounded so melodious at first, the traditional Irish music that played in the background soon cloyed, as song after song began to leave the same impression. To compound the monotony, Jennifer's mother then started asking again about MacDarragh's father back in New York, wondering if the family could expect a marriage date anytime soon. Breaking away from her mother's entreaties, an ex-school mate Jennifer hadn't seen in fifteen years then accosted her. This conversation proved the final straw. Upon learning that Jennifer had come back to live in the Republic of Ireland, her old school friend, who had remained in Ireland through their post-school years, insisted that the recent influx of return migrants were the real reason behind the country's spike in property prices.

For fear of appearing rude, Jennifer waited until the bride and groom finished the ritual first dance. She then quietly gathered up her son, slipped out of the hotel unnoticed, and found herself back in her house in Galway shortly after midnight.

Jennifer's unfolding wedding story, from her excited arrival to her hurried exit, captures in microcosm many of the complexities and contradictions that beset return migrants' experience of home upon (re)settlement. Her initial expectations of bonding with people and place materialized, but shortly thereafter were frustrated – leaving a bittersweet aftertaste. In ways, Jennifer's attempt to make sense of her wedding experience is exemplary of the dilemma often faced by return migrants when they try to define what home means to them in the context of homecoming. Summing up the day's events, Jennifer states: "I can't figure it out. You know, I love being home. But then again, I get so fed-up here sometimes. My cousin's wedding, it really showed to me how . . . I'm – what do they say – stuck between a rock and a hard place" (Interview with Jennifer, 09/09/2007).

Put another way, home is a compelling concept. To ask certain people how they define home provokes an incredulous silence because its meaning is so self-evident and straightforward to them. Yet ask others the very same question, and their struggle to make sense of this notion suggests a vexing set of messy, paradoxical and ambiguous meanings. In other words, home is both simple and complex (Douglas 1991). It can be defined by what it excludes, as well as by its openness to outside influences (Massey 2005). It is a space at once familiar and strange (Fortier 2003). It is established simultaneously at rest and on the move (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

Recent academic research pays much attention to home's fluid thresholds. The "sedentarist analytic bias" (Chu 2006, 397) that sees home as a fixed, bounded and enclosed space is problematized, as the analytical focus shifts to the boundary-crossing capacity of home to extend and connect people, places and cultures across time and space (Bradotti 1994; Brennan 1997; Brettell 2006; Datta 2010; Datta and Brickell 2010; Nowicka 2006). Traditional definitions of home as a reliable and unchanging space are revised, as the increasing movement and mobility of people in a globalizing world disrupts home's set boundaries, both for those who actually

move residence, as well as for those who remain in one place (Ahmed et al. 2003; Brah 1996; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Olwig-Fog 2002, 2007). Recent studies go a long way towards delineating the complicated contours of contemporary understandings of home, as people's pluri-locational attachments to homes astride multiple borders are addressed (Germann-Molz 2008). The emphasis in recent research falls on the dynamic and processual nature of home, for both those who move and those who stay (Ahmed 1999, 2000, 2004.). Home represents an intersection between past, present and future, as the lived linkages and connections across time and space underscore the centrifugal nature of home for growing numbers of people.

Much of this research on the changing meanings of home focuses on those who move across international borders (Salih 2003). Migrants, faced with the challenge of uprooting their lives from one place and regrounding them in another, throw into sharp relief many of the complexities and contradictions that beset the notion of home (Armbuster 2002; Staeheli and Nagel 2006). In particular, migrants' settlement and integration experiences in a new place represent an exemplar of the relational nature of home (McKay 2006b). Migrants' attempts to understand the intersecting and overlapping ties they forge to more than one place brings into direct view the broader connections that increasingly define home in contemporary societies. Scholars show a fascination with the new and enduring connections that mobile people display towards various geographical contexts, which blurs traditional distinctions between home and away. Recent scholarship challenges widespread assumptions that displacement is an inherent feature of diasporic life, as the analytic focus emphasises migrants' multiple identities and variegated attachments to both proximate and distant homes (Al-Ali and Khoser 2002; Charney and Kiong 2003; Fortier 2001).

Yet, in spite of migrants' loosening of home's more territorially-bound definitions, the desire for a discreet, secure and centripetal home remains. In other words, unsettling home from its foundational status as origin does not necessarily dim the longing for a stable, settled and bounded interpretation of home (Butcher 2010). Crucially, a tension exists between sedentarist and nomadic approaches to home, as both its fluid and grounded aspects complement and co-exist with one another

(Constable 2004; Lam and Yeoh 2004; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2003; Magat 1999). Some recent scholarship calls for an approach that relinquishes the temptation to polarize debates on home as either fixed or fluid, static or fluctuating (Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004; Morley 2000). Instead, some researchers show how people mediate between the experience of home as fluid and situationally flexible and their simultaneous need for certain patterns of order, predictability and stability at home (Tolia-Kelly 2006; Varley 2008; Walsh 2006a, 2006b; Wiles 2008; Young 1997).

The present thesis joins recent debates on the nature of home by examining the ideas of home among Irish-born return migrants who left the Republic of Ireland in the late-1980s/early-1990s for the United States and who then came back at the beginning of the 2000s. The focus on return migrants grants a useful entry point to study these tensions between sedentarist and nomadic approaches to home. Return migrants occupy a world that is both old and new, familiar yet strange. Having initially left home to settle in a new place, they then come back to the old/new place, compelled to negotiate home yet again. In short, returnees represent a fascinating group through which to study the idea of home. The ways in which they think through the places they inhabit offers potentially fresh insight into recent debates that problematize traditional approaches to home. Their situation accentuates the intersections between continuity and change, stasis and mobility, placement and displacement that are at the heart of the experience of home. The studies of home outlined above focus mainly on the experiences of those who either move away from home or those who stay. What is not fully known, however, is whether return migrants understand home in ways that are similar or not to those outlined for other migrant and non-migrant groups. In other words, can a focus on return migrants' experiences of (re)settlement tell us anything new about the nature of home at the beginning of the twenty-first century?

The central question framing the thesis is: *How do participants' migration and (re)settlement experiences influence their ideas of home?* In attempting to answer this question, further related questions are explored. First, how do the processes of emigration and return reconfigure ideas of home? Second, what do participants'

narratives of negotiating the homecoming tell us about conceptualizations of home in contemporary society?

The overarching argument of the thesis is that participants' articulations of home represent an alternative to fixed, bounded and exclusionary understandings of home, without necessarily reducing the longing for a discreet, foundational and originary home. This is important because their accounts of home begin to challenge narrow readings of locality and stable definitions of identity. Moreover, their narratives of home force researchers to ask awkward questions about who belongs to particular places, and on what basis claims to membership are made. The anxieties associated with the experience of return means that home can be simultaneously a space of both homecoming and leavetaking, blurring distinctions between 'here' and 'there', home and away. Yet in spite of this, the allure of a definitionally concrete meaning of home simultaneously continues to inflect participants' accounts of return. Thus, what participants' narratives draw attention to is the often-overlooked tension between home's dual meaning: its lived and longed-for aspects. Participants' accounts of (re)settlement point towards an accommodation of both grounded and uprooted homes simultaneously: home as translocally lived, yet longed-for as discreetly-defined. This is significant because, while the reality of return revises the expectations surrounding homecoming for many, opening out home to broader sets of connections does not necessarily mitigate the longing to belong 'at home', to anchor the elusive aspects of home.

I develop this argument throughout the thesis by analyzing participants' descriptions of (re)settlement in the old/new places they inhabit. I show that the majority of participants conventionally justify the return decision as the restoration of a settled sense of home. Their motivations for deciding to return testify to the resilience of a notion of return-as-homecoming, which frequently reinstates exclusionary boundaries around home and fixes it as foundational. By and large, participants hold an expectation of return as reinsertion into a bounded, predictable and secure home – reifying a model of "home-as-familiarity, as a place where one seamlessly fits in, thus leaving little room for feelings of estrangement" (Fortier 2003, 118). I suggest that the actual experience of (re)settlement, however, requires many participants to

redefine home upon return. From the perspective of return migrants, it is this dissonance and tension between the idea and the actuality of home that precipitates a reconsideration of the nature of home. That said, while homecoming is no longer understood as the final arrival or denouement to the migration journey, opening out home to broader sets of connections does not necessarily mitigate the longing to belong ‘at home’, to anchor the elusive aspects of home. My work investigates how participants’ negotiation of the (re)settlement experience allows for an accommodation of both grounded and uprooted homes simultaneously. In other words, through an analysis of intensive interviews with participants, I tease out the ways in which their interpretations of home in the post-return context “foreground the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of staying put” (Brah 1996, 16).

By elucidating the relationship between the moored and mobile moments of home as complementary and co-existing rather than conflicting and contending, my research contributes to academic debates on home in the following ways. First, the analysis of home in this thesis is situated within a unique historical context. During the first half-decade of the 2000s, the Republic of Ireland underwent an intense socio-economic metamorphosis (O’ Toole 2009). This included the well-documented emergence of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ economy, cultural and attitudinal shifts within society and its institutions, as well as demographic changes towards a more multicultural population (Gilmartin and White 2008). These transformations suggest that for those Irish-born migrants who returned to live in the Republic of Ireland in the early ‘noughties’, ‘home’ had altered dramatically. Therefore, this thesis takes on an added significance as it is expected that the pressing question of home for return migrants assumes even greater urgency when the homecoming occurs during a period of rapid social change.

The second main contribution of my research relates to debates on the nature of home in contemporary societies. I consider how the dichotomy between sedentarist and mobile approaches that has often structured analysis of home is a false one. Instead, I emphasize a particular conceptualization of home in contemporary societies: a conceptualization that is sensitive to home’s nuanced straddling of

familiarity and estrangement, continuity and change, rest and movement. The research contributes an empirical elaboration of widespread theoretical debates on the consequences of increasing mobility for understanding the idea of home in contemporary societies. It seeks to refine appreciation of and shed light on the ways in which mobility influences the conceptualization of home, specifically in the context of return migration. Through its detailed ethnographic account, my work contributes to recent calls to ‘ground’ debates on migrants’ homes (Walsh 2006a). The empirical account I present demonstrates the often-overlooked tensions between the lived and the desired meanings of home in influencing a simultaneously stretched and bounded understanding of home. Building this argument is especially apposite to the study of return migration. It extends, however, to more general debates about home for diverse groups of people, for both migrants and those who stay at home. In other words, it is not only those who move away from home, or those who return, who confront the question of what home means to them. In a globalizing and mobile world of blurred distinctions between the diasporic and the indigenous, home can be as equally confusing, complex and opaque an issue for relatively immobile people as it can be for the chronically mobile (Brah 1996). Therefore, the conceptualization of home I advance throughout the thesis may be applied to the study of home in other and divergent contexts.

1.2 Outlining the thesis

To set the present work in context, I review the extensive literature on home from across the social sciences in Chapter 2. This chapter follows Blunt and Varley’s (2004) heuristic model for analyzing home according to its three dominant dimensions: location, identification, and belonging. I suggest that current conceptual approaches to the study of home are mindful of its variegated, overlapping and complex meanings. I argue, however, that the ways in which return migrants make sense of the concept of home remains undertheorized in certain contexts. By placing the current study within the context of prior scholarship on home, I develop a theoretical framework for analysing the empirical material presented in the substantive chapters of the thesis.

The broad historical background of Irish emigration and return is developed in Chapter 3. Through an examination of Census reports, as well as reviews of various media, government and policy documents surrounding the topic of Irish migration, I provide a contextual backdrop to return migration in the Republic of Ireland during the opening years of the twentieth-first century. I consider the complex and often-contradictory portrayals of return migrants in Irish society, and suggest that, regardless of their accuracy, these representations are important because they impinge on and influence participants' ideas of home in the post-return context.

In Chapter 4 I elucidate the methodology and methods that inform the research presented in the empirical chapters of this thesis. The aim of this chapter is to offer a justification for the study's ethnographically-informed techniques that help answer the research questions about returnees' ideas of home. The chapter outlines the study's research design, and explains the rationale for choosing the particular field-sites around Galway and Dublin, as well as the logic behind delimiting criteria for the selection of participants in the research. It also explains the process of data collection and analysis, and discusses the triangulation of sources through conducting semi-structured interviews and reviewing myriad documentary sources. My own positionality as a social researcher *and* as a return migrant within the field is then discussed, and the role of reflexivity in the conduct of research is considered.

The discussion of the empirical material begins in Chapter 5, where I analyse participants' explanations for the decision to return to the Republic of Ireland. This chapter foregrounds explicitly participants' expectations surrounding the return. I argue that, alongside the myriad motivations for return, participants' return decisions are influenced by an expectation of return-as-homecoming, as reinsertion into a familiar, predictable and settled home. This sets up the analysis of home in the post-return context that the three remaining empirical chapters focus on. I show how a model of home-as-familiarity continues to influence participants' ideas of home and their mobility decisions in a direct way. In the following three chapters, I analyse the consequences of conceptualizing home as a familiar, secure and discreet notion and,

importantly, examine the ways in which the idea and the actuality of home simultaneously meet and diverge for participants in the post-return context.

In Chapter 6 I examine the first dominant dimension of home identified in this thesis: namely, home and its relationship with location. It is important to point out that while the dominant dimensions of home are experientially entangled, for the purposes of this empirical elaboration they are kept analytically distinct. In this light, this chapter focuses on analysing participants' accounts of 'where' they locate home in the post-return context. I demonstrate the ways in which their narratives of home's location disrupt foundational accounts of home as the ultimate place of origin or resting place, and develop further the argument that participants' (re)settlement experiences reveal the unbounded, unmoored aspects at the heart of home. Nevertheless, the tension evident between participants' lived and longed-for homes suggest that home's location is simultaneously both geographically diffuse *and* bounded. Participants' attempts to (re)settle in the old/new place makes explicit home's variegated dimension of location. Their experiences, however, pertain to a more general and underlying facet of home's location as a place that is at once open and closed, connected yet confined.

In Chapter 7 I build on the argument developed in Chapter 6 that home in contemporary societies is inflected by an interplay between uprooting *and* regrounding forces, sedentary *and* mobile sources. By analysing participants' narratives of 'who they are' in relation to 'where they are' (Christou 2002), I show that their self-identities upon homecoming fracture the idea of an original home as the authentic ground of identity, without thereby ceasing to articulate a desire for an integrated identity. Furthermore, the changing and multiple facets of identity that participants' (re)settlement experiences foreground are relevant to other groups and contexts beyond the current study.

Home's third dimension of belonging is in some respects synonymous with its subjective aspects of location and identification. Part of the meaning of belonging, however, involves the ways in which others ascribe or categorise one as belonging (or not) to a particular home. This is significant because, more so than the previous

empirical chapters, I show in Chapter 8 that the idea of home is not only a matter for individual subjective appreciation, but is also imposed in various ways on certain people by others. In other words, home is relationally defined by both the individual and the individual's relationship within a wider collective. I argue in Chapter 8 that the normative expectations of the majority resident Irish population impinge upon participants' articulations of belonging to home upon return. This leads many participants to suggest a simultaneous status as both cultural 'insiders' and 'outsiders', as they acknowledge their 'sameness' to and 'difference' from the mainstream Irish population. This is important because, without dismissing the longing to belong in an uncomplicated manner, some participants articulate a model of belonging that is attentive to the multiple and paradoxical registers of affiliation that people express towards home. Their narratives begin to challenge narrow definitions of home, in the process opening up questions about who belongs to home and on what basis.

I conclude the thesis in Chapter 9 by suggesting that the detailed examination of home for Irish-born return migrants from the United States connects to wider debates about the nature of home in contemporary societies. I draw out the theoretical and empirical implications of the research findings. The analytical message emphasised throughout the empirical chapters of the thesis is shown to have consequences for the ways in which home is conceptualized more generally. Return migrants' recognition of the ambiguity over home's dominant dimensions of location, identification and belonging calls into question the foundational status of home-as-origins, and challenges the presumption that grounded homes are not also sites of upheaval, relocation and uprooting. Without doubt, the prospect of a grounded home providing a wider sense of ontological security continues to be an alluring prospect for many. At the same time, re-imagining home involves going beyond oppositional categories of stasis versus movement, and so on, and rethinking the relationship between them as complementary.

Chapter 2 Understandings of home: A review of the literature

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I develop a conceptual approach for analysing participants' narratives of home in the empirical chapters of the thesis. As discussed briefly in Chapter 1, home is currently a much-discussed and popular concept among scholars. I expand on the discussion of home in the previous chapter by reviewing the current state of knowledge on home from across the social sciences. This literature review has three related aims. First, and primarily, the literature review situates the present thesis within the context of prior scholarship on home. Second, placing the thesis within this research background suggests some limitations of existing approaches to the study of home. Third, the approach to home I outline in this chapter justifies the salience of the present study.

I consider the ways in which recent conceptualizations of home elucidate the shifting and changing meanings of this complex notion in a globalising world. Moreover, I show that much of this recent research focuses on the lived experiences of both those who stay in one place and those who move to a new place. What remains undertheorised, however, is how return migrants understand home in the context of homecoming to the old/new place. I argue that recent debates on home emphasise the co-presence of both grounded and mobile practices that constitute people's everyday sense of home, for both migrant and non-migrant groups. Whether return migrants share this framework for articulating home is not fully understood.

Even a cursory dictionary definition of the word 'home' highlights the lack of precision surrounding its usage. The Oxford English Dictionary lists fourteen entries under the term. In everyday speech, people causally use the phrase and its associated idiomatic expressions to refer to a battery of emotional states, themes, situations and feelings. Yi-Fu Tuan (1977, 27) states of the notion of home that "perhaps no single term in another language covers a significative field of comparable scope." This semantic confusion is mirrored at the conceptual level. There is a profusion of research on the idea of home in recent years. Without any common cross-disciplinary understandings of what the concept covers, home is adopted as a major analytic tool in sociology (Mallet 2004), social anthropology (Al-Ali and Khoser 2002; Espiritu

2003), literature (Rubenstein 2001), law (Fox 2006), philosophy (Casey 1993, 1998), gerontology (Gustafson 2001a), psychology (Manzo 2003), housing studies (Easthope 2004), media studies (Morley 2000), as well as human geography (Anderson et al. 2003; Blunt 2005; Blunt et al. 2007; Christou 2006a, 2006b; Domosh 1998; Duncan and Lambert 2003; Jacobs 2003; Smith 2004).

In short, home is a notoriously difficult concept to define. One reason for this is that home is a multidimensional concept (Mallet 2004). Home contains variegated and overlapping aspects that are intimately related, yet at the same time distinct. It is possibly this multidimensional quality of home that stimulates the rich and divergent research agendas that use home as a key concept. Nevertheless, a failure to distinguish between the different meanings attached to the different dimensions of home may result in a certain confusion about the work home does as a concept. In order to develop the conceptual approach that my research follows, I build on Blunt and Varley's (2004) heuristic model that analyses home from the perspective of its three dominant dimensions: namely, home and its relationship with place, or location; home and its relationship with a sense of self, or identification; and home and its relationship with belonging. Spelling out this tripartite nature of the concept, Blunt and Varley (2004, 3) state that "current research on the home is often concerned with mobile geographies of dwelling . . . and the ways in which ideas of home invoke a sense of place, belonging or alienation that is intimately tied to a sense of self."

Systematically sorting the literature on home into its three dominant and distinct dimensions as suggested by Blunt and Varley helps to locate the present thesis in relation to existing research. This chapter therefore contains three main sections, with each section in turn addressing one of the three dominant dimensions of home. In the first major section of this chapter, I review existing literature that examines the dimension of location in relation to home. I discuss recent work in human geography and other disciplines that reconceptualize traditional notions of space and place, and look at the consequences of this theoretical work for the topography of home. Following this, I review scholarship in migration studies examining the 'where' of migrants' homes. I then discuss current research in return migration scholarship

looking at returnees' place-attachments to home. I suggest that recent debates in return migration show an appreciation of the pluri-locational attachments to homes that returnees often articulate in the post-return context.

In the second major section of this chapter I examine a further strand of home scholarship that examines the relationship between home and identity. First, I review literature that conceptualizes home as an expression of selfhood. Then I move on to an examination of those empirical studies that problematize this relationship, and argue that contemporary identification with home is marked by hybrid identifications with homes 'here' and 'there'. Following this, I consider recent work on return migration that suggests that the reality of life in the post-return context elicits differing identifications with home for returnees. The clichéd mantra of older return migration studies that 'return = homecoming' is problematized by more recent approaches, as returnees display a continued identification with homes elsewhere.

In the final major section of the chapter I review the literature on home and its relationship with the closely allied notion of belonging. I begin by examining scholarship that looks at the ways in which belonging (or not) to home is not merely a matter of individual appreciation, choice or disposition, but is an often-ascribed or imposed category that is foisted in various ways upon certain individuals or social groups by others. Following this, I review literature that considers the ways in which people are categorized by others as either the 'same' as or 'different' from dominant societal groups.

2.2 Geographies of home and location

In keeping with Blunt and Varley's (2004) broad framework for analysing home, the first dominant dimension of home that is discussed in this thesis is that of location. Therefore, in this section I examine the dimension of location as it relates to the notion of home. It looks at the 'where' that people refer to when they speak about home. Throughout this section I argue that part of the changing meaning of home is that the ways it expands and connects various places and locales – the 'translocal home' (Datta 2010) – does not necessarily displace the abiding grip of a more territorialized and locationally discreet idea of home. Through the review of the

relevant literature, I show that this is the case with home both for those who live spatially circumscribed lives and for the highly mobile members of society. I suggest, furthermore, that this reworking of ideas of location and place bears a direct relevance to analysing participants' narratives of home in the current thesis. In this section I build on prior scholarship examining home's location in order to provide a framework for analysing how participants' (re)settlement experiences influence 'where' they understand home as located. I show that reconceptualising home as a multi-located, unbounded and extroverted place for return migrants does not take into full account their ongoing and simultaneous desire for a settled, bounded and introverted interpretation of home in the old/new places they inhabit. In other words, a tension between the lived and the desired experience of home's location informs participants' conceptualizations of home in the current thesis. This discussion is especially pertinent to participants' empirical elaboration of home in Chapters 5 and 6 of the current thesis.

2.2.1 Home (un)bound

One recurrent and dominant strand of research on home relates it to a fixed, bounded and discreet location. Inspired by philosophical writings on place (Bachelard 1958; Casey 1993, 1998; Heidegger 1971), this approach examines the ways a sense of home plays an important role in grounding and attaching people to a particular place. This view, however, does not merely equate home with a material house, a domicile, but also involves an understanding of home as related to more imaginative and abstract notions of dwelling and place-attachment (Bird 1995; Blunt and Dowling 2006). These latter aspects are far more elusive and difficult to pin-down than the concrete structure of a house's four walls (Fox 2006). Scholars emphasise the strong feelings and emotions associated with a sense of rootedness and continuity that residence in a particular location gives some people (Lee and Hummon 1993; Buttimer 1980; Casey 1998). In human geography, this approach to understanding home is taken up by several authors (Cloke, Milbourne and Widdowfield 2000; Relph 1976; Tuan 1980). Home is placed at the centre of their analyses because it is understood as a place full of significance for people. Kim Dovey (1985, 47) sums up this approach to the location of home, describing it as

a sacred place, a secure place, a place of certainty and stability. It is a principle by which we order our existence in space. Home is demarcated territory with both physical and symbolic boundaries that ensure that dwellers can control access and behaviour within . . . To be at home means to know where you are; it means to inhabit a secure centre and to be oriented in space.

This concatenation of largely unquestioned socio-territorial impulses around a particular place, or set of places, involves an understanding of home as a haven – *dolce domum* – from real or imagined threats, a relatively unchanging, unmoving space that relies on sedentarist theories of people and place (Cresswell 1996, 2004; Malkki 1992; Pollini 2005). In these understandings, home is a strictly demarcated locale wherein a more abstract form of ontological security is sought (Dupuis and Thorns 1998). Peoples' marking out of space displays their territorial impulses (Delaney 2005; Wise Macgregor 2000), and their deeply felt love for and emotional attachments to those places – their 'topophilia' (Tuan 1980) – is nurtured. In this approach, the study of home is underpinned by a metaphysics of fixity (Cresswell 2004), a sedentarist logic (Malkki 1992) that sees the spatial order of home as stationary, composed of significant segments of space. These writings on home are important. They emphasise a real and continued need of people to feel safe, secure and settled in an easily and quickly identifiable location. This approach to the study of home pertains directly to the current thesis.

Yet despite the relevance of the above approach for analysing home, numerous authors problematize the assumptions upon which a bounded interpretation of home relies (Easthope 2004; Gustafson 2001b; McDowell 1999; Pred 1984). Drawing on key theoretical discussions of the meaning of space and place in contemporary society, a different approach stresses the open, porous and multi-located nature of home for people. Deirdre McKay (2006a, 198) claims that people "are actually holding on to notions of territory and place . . . but also understanding the nature and, in particular, the boundaries of territory . . . somewhat differently." This qualitative shift in people's understanding of territory emphasises the inherently expansive, connected nature of home's location. Rather than pinning-down home as static and

stationary, much recent research understands home as constituted through intersecting social relations, openings and porosity as well as by closed boundaries and unchanging relations (Bammer 1992; Heller 1995; Reid 2007). Sallie Marston (2000, 2004) illustrates this multi-scalar approach to home. She demonstrates how home's meaning is located across a range of nested and overlapping spatial scales, from the micro-level of the body and household, to the macro-level of the city, nation and globe.

Doreen Massey's writings on space and place are a key reference for approaches that critique singular and static understandings of home. Massey (1994, 5) argues that a discreet location of home relies on a conception of places as "singular, fixed and bounded entities defined through opposition." By contrast, Massey (1995, 59) understands place "as a meeting-place, the location of intersections of particular bundles of activity space, of connections and interrelations, of influences and movements." The consequence of this for a concept of home, argues Massey (1992, 13), is that "a large part of that place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it." Massey (1992, 1994, 1995, 2005) claims that places are formed out of particular sets of social relations which interact at a particular location. Some of the social relations integral to the identity of a place will exceed the area being referred to as that particular place; hence, places are constituted not always in opposition to other places, but also through positive relationships with other places. Places, rather than being understood as rooted in notions of the authentic and unchanging, are always marked by their connectivity, openness and change.

Influenced by Massey's reworking of place and location into new forms, recent research examines the notion of home as a site of both travel and dwelling, upheaval and order. Mindful of the changing conditions for being at home in a world of increasing mobility, this research places the emphasis squarely on the interface between inside and outside, private and public in locating home (Germann-Molz 2008; Gurney 2003; Kelleher 2000; Ryan 2008). Dichotomous understandings of home versus away, place versus non-place, here versus there, and so on, are

disrupted, as scholars foreground people's lived experiences of the intertwining of dispersed and stretched locations in constituting 'where' home is (Duncan and Lambert 2003).

This emphasis on the links and connections between places that people forge in locating home is significant. Inspired by Massey's writings, much recent research articulates the multi-located nature of home for many people in contemporary society. This approach to home relates explicitly to the current thesis. As will be discussed in Chapter 6, the 'where' of home displays a complex topographic nature for many participants in this thesis. I demonstrate the ways in which participants straddle geographically diffuse homes both 'here' and 'there'.

2.2.2 Placing migrants' homes

While scholars are keen to demonstrate the changing and variegated nature of home's location in contemporary societies, this is especially the case in research on migrants' homes. As Staeheli and Nagel (2006, 1602) put it, "migrants, who, by the very act of moving from one place to another, throw into question the ability to locate people and communities in specific places, specific homes." The speed, intensity, frequency and volume of human mobility and migration around the globe are sometimes claimed to saturate all facets of contemporary life (Lash and Urry 1994; Urry 2000). In particular, migrant transnationalism, and the rise of a transnational paradigm in migration studies, is especially to the fore in providing a theoretical framework for analyzing the location-spanning social, economic and political ties that migrants sustain across borders. While migrants maintaining links with their country of origin is clearly not a new phenomenon, the real novelty of the 'transnational turn' (Levitt 2001) for the study of migrants' lives is that it offers an explicit focus on the 'bifocality' (Rouse 1991), the 'dual frame of reference' (Guarnizo 1997) or 'binationality' (Kyle 2000) that travellers create and maintain. In other words, recent migration studies show an appreciation of the importance and salience of both place of origin and destination in influencing migrants' routine practices and everyday lives (Al-Ali and Khoser 2002; Baldassar 1997; Basch et al. 1994).

It is in this context that many commentators begin to question dominant ideas about the traditionally bounded home, whereby already-contested imaginings and representations of home become even more messy, blurred and confused (Ahmed et al. 2003; Clifford 1997; Nowicka 2006, 2007). Some scholars suggest that home may be a casualty of the new patterns and pathways of international travel (Auge 1995; Berger 1984). Recent scholarship, however, argues that it is more accurate to examine the ways in which migrants continue to ‘ground’ their lives astride locations and looks at how home is already inflected with mobility – and conversely, with the ways mobility is inflected with gestures of attachment (Conradson and Latham 2005; Easthope 2009; Flynn 2007; Kong 1999; Lamb 2002; Ley 2004; Walsh 2006b). The question, then, is not whether home continues to matter or not amidst all the mobility, but rather how home – and its location – remains a rich and resilient feature of contemporary societies (Germann-Molz 2008).

In response to this, much current research investigates mobile geographies of home, looking at the ways in which people, but especially migrants, dwell through travel, and vice versa (Ahmed et al. 2003; Blunt 2007; Blunt and Dowling 2006; Blunt and Varley 2004; Fortier 1999, 2001). These studies suggest that mobility *and* stasis, displacement *and* placement, as well as roots *and* routes go into the making of home (Ahmed et al. 2003; Clifford 1997; Gilroy 1993; Gustafson 2001b). In other words, in order to grasp the empirical reality of contemporary meanings of home and home-making practices for migrants, it is necessary, as David Morley (2000, 41) argues, to reconceptualize “the conventional contrast between traditional, place-based notions of home . . . and the contemporary experience of globalization in such a way that we might see this not as a contrast between presence and absence of an experience of homeliness but rather as two different modalities of this experience.”

One particularly detailed examination of this reworking of the relationship between place and mobility is Magdalena Nowicka’s (2006, 2007) research on the experience of home for United Nations staff members. These mobile professionals live chronically itinerant lifestyles, as their roles within this international organisation periodically places them in new countries. Nowicka examines specifically *how* homes are localised and territorially pinned-down for her respondents. Refusing to

assume that home is a stable physical place where domestic life is realised, Nowicka examines home as the emplacement of practices at varied geographical stretch and as an entity that is attached yet mobile. Here home is understood as a dynamic process of localising particular sets of relationships that do not necessarily depend on the essential qualities of a place. Home, in other words, is a process, an achievement involving both the people we share home with but also the objects therein. The mobile professionals Nowicka studies construct a sense of home primarily around people and objects, establishing sets of relationships before these sediment to become what we have traditionally called 'place'. For Nowicka (2006, 82), then, home is

a space in-becoming and not a fixed, pre-established place. . . . First, home arises out of sets of elements and relationships. Then home becomes localised and this localising has further effects. Social scientists have focused on homes that have already become localised without asking how this process took place. They bind homes to particular sites and people to these homes. Exploring homes in networks allows us to comprehend them before their spatial localisations and ask how they relate to space.

In this context, the construction of home is not necessarily tied to a fixed location, but emerges out of the regular reiteration of social processes and sets of relationships to both humans and non-humans (Anderson et al. 2003; Hitchings 2004; Jacobs and Smith 2008; Miller 1998, 2001). Breaking down the binary of 'nomadic' and 'sedentarist' paradigms of home reveals that it is the exclusive preserve of neither, but is implicated in both processes.

Nowicka's work offers a nuanced elaboration of how migrants' homes come to be well-anchored in multiple locations, as well as showing how home is an open space with relatively permeable and variable borders. Her conceptualization of home, however, overlooks the frequent dissonance between the lived and the ideal aspects of home. In other words, while home for migrants is very much about the real experience of establishing and maintaining connections and links between various

locations, this does not detract from the continued salience of home's idealized aspects. Jeanne Moore (2000, 212) highlights this dual meaning of home, stating that, for migrants in diaspora, there is often a "tension between the real experience of home and its idealized form." While the implications of this tension between the lived and the longed-for home are manifold, one possibility is that migrants' return aspirations to their country of origin are heightened in an effort to bridge the gap between the existing and the desired home. The 'myth of return' in diaspora is much-discussed in migration literature (Al-Rasheed 1994; Bovenkerk 1974; Cassarino 2004; Zetter 1999), as migrants frequently frame and idealize the homecoming as re-insertion into a stable, secure, bounded and predictable home. At the same time, the complex and pluri-located nature of home in diaspora suggests a discord between "living here and remembering/desiring another place" (Clifford 1994, 311), leading to a set of contradictory longings among migrants. This work elucidating the location(s) of migrants' homes is particularly useful in terms of current thesis. In Chapter 6 I build on the insights of migration scholars in examining the multi-located nature of home for participants.

2.2.3 Placing return migrants' homes

'Where' home is for migrants in the above-cited studies offers a precise lens through which to conceptualise the dimension of location in relation to home. However, what about those migrants who return to their country of origin? Is there an active retention of the ties forged in diaspora, or are migrants' spatially stretched understandings of home dismantled upon homecoming? A number of authors argue that, for far too long, return was synonymous with homecoming (Baldassar 1997, 2001; Hammond 1999, 2004; King 2000; Muggeridge and Dona 2006; Pilkington and Flynn 1999; Stepputat 1994). In other words, return to the country of origin was seen as the natural end of the migration cycle, whereby returnees reinserted themselves smoothly into their country of origin. Some recent return migration scholarship, however, demonstrates how returnees often experience difficulties readjusting upon homecoming (Potter et al. 2005; Thomas-Hope 2002). In other words, the often-uninterrogated equation that

'repatriation = homecoming' (Hammond 1999, 2004) is questioned, as scholars now interrogate how returnees experience the old/new places they inhabit.

In this research vein, recent scholarship on return migration suggests that the transnational spatial imaginaries of returnees display a resilience upon return, thereby calling into question the assumption that return is a permanent homecoming (Allen 1996; Black 2002; Black and Khoser 1999; Hammond 1999, 2004; Long and Oxfeld 2004). Complicating the "unilateral relationship between belonging and location" (Ahmed et al. 2003, 7) that has long-existed in return migration studies, recent studies of return suggest ways in which returnees reconfigure place upon homecoming (Muggeridge and Dona 2006; Ray 2000; Warner 1994). These studies highlight not only home's pluri-locational coordinates upon return, but by underscoring the new anxieties that return often brings, they also problematize the myth that return is an uncomplicated re-insertion into a person's ideal habitat (Christou 2002; Conway 2005; Corcoran 2003). What this scholarship highlights, in essence, is that the tension evident in diaspora between the lived and the longed-for home may translate to the return environment (Ramji 2006). Once the dream of return is realized, returnees may re-evaluate 'where' home is located if the expectations of return do not meet the realities of homecoming. In many instances, this results in returnees negotiating geographically diffuse locations in an effort to ground a sense of home (Christou 2006a; Constable 1999; Duval 2004, 2005; King 2000). What is often overlooked in this research, however, is the ways in which returnees simultaneously retain an imaginary of a safe, secured and bounded location of home alongside the elastic aspects of home's location.

This return migration research is especially relevant to the present study. In Chapter 6 I build on recent return migration scholarship in order to examine participants' articulations of home's dimension of location. I show that, for many participants, 'where' home is cannot be pinned-down to a uniquely located place upon return. Disrupting foundational accounts of home as one's original place of origin, however, does not necessarily weaken participants' attachment to the idea of a stable, fixed and bounded place to call home.

2.3 Geographies of home and identification

It must be pointed out that home's domains seep into one another, and maintaining analytical distinctions between its dominant dimensions is difficult. For example, people's place-attachments are similar to and overlap with their place-identities (Martin 1997), while identification with home shares characteristics in common with a sense of belonging to home (Anthias 2008). This section differs from the previous section on location and the following section on belonging insofar as I focus on studies that examine individuals' sense of who they understand themselves to be in relation to home. In the previous section I reviewed literature on 'where' home is located for people. In other words, in Section 2.2 I looked at how home comes to be understood through the various places that define it. While acknowledging the similarities between the dimensions of location and identification, this section differs from Section 2.2 insofar as I focus explicitly on individuals' sense of who they understand themselves to be in relation to home. Furthermore, the subjective level of identification is symbiotically related to the social level of identification with wider collectives and groups. Defining 'who I am' is not purely the work of an isolated individual, but involves social interaction and identification with or against others. I differentiate this section from the following one insofar as I review literature that investigates people's articulations of self in relation to home. In Section 2.4, through the prism of belonging, I examine the social side of home as it relates to the issue of social membership.

So keeping this in mind, in this section I consider the second of home's dominant dimensions: namely, that of identification. I review literature examining the ways in which people's sense of self relates to the notion of home. In other words, this section examines the ways in which people speak about 'who they are' in relation to 'where they are'. I argue that complex and variegated narratives of self disrupt foundational accounts of home as the source of an authentic identity without thereby eclipsing the longing for a singular and integrated identification with home. Through the review of the literature, I suggest that complex models of identification are a feature of home for both migrant and non-migrant groups. I show, furthermore, that re-evaluating the relationship between home and identity in recent scholarship

pertains directly to the current thesis. By building on this prior scholarship examining home's dimension of identification, this section develops the framework for analysing participants' narratives of 'who they are' in relation to 'where they are'. I demonstrate that current approaches that rework the relationship between home and identification as multivalent, dynamic and processual do not fully account for the ways in which return migrants negotiate a sense of self upon homecoming. This is particularly relevant to the discussion of participants' narratives of home in Chapter 7 of the current thesis.

2.3.1 Home and identity nexus

A rich seam of research in the area of housing studies is keen to stress the strong bindings between the building and/or furnishing of a dwelling unit and expressions of selfhood (Cooper Marcus 1995; Gurney 2003; Winstanley et al. 2002). Similar to the relationship between place and dwelling discussed in the previous section, one strand of the academic literature examines how a positive connection with home creates a broader form of ontological security that grounds a sense of self in the wider environment (Dupuis and Thorns 1998; Easthope 2004; Fox 2006; Rowles and Chaudhury 2005). In particular, theoretical and empirical research in environmental psychology offers approaches to the ways in which peoples' identifications with various places are an attempt to shape (in)human space in an effort to reflect more far-reaching human concerns about self-identity (Gustafson 2001b, 2006; Manzo 2003; Moore 2000). Peoples' understanding of home informs and helps constitute their identity, and vice versa, whereby a robust sense of home anchors a secure sense of self in the world.

This nexus between home and identification is perhaps best illustrated when home is threatened and/or taken away. A sizable body of literature exists showing the challenges to self-identity when home is imperilled (Mitchell 2007; Tsuda 1999, 2001). Research on homeless people (May 2000), refugees (Black and Khoser 1999; Black 2002; Long and Oxfeld 2004), mortgage defaulters (Fox 2006, Gurney 1997, 2003), and so on, highlights how the intimate links between selfhood and a sense of home are jeopardised when home is destroyed, confiscated and/or forcibly

transformed (Porteous and Smith 2001). As Brown and Perkins (1992, 235) put it, “place attachments are integral to self-definitions, including individual and communal aspects of identity; disruptions threaten self-definitions.”

Identity, however, is not a zero-sum game based on fixed identifications with a singular home. The above account of peoples’ identifications with home suggests that identity is a possessive attribute and relatively static condition. Much writing on identity, however, stresses that identification is a processual, ongoing achievement of individuals or groups that is constantly negotiated in and through place (Anthias 2001, 2008; Dwyer 2003; Feldman 2006; Hall 1992; Massey 2005; McDowell 1999; Stewart et al. 1997). The loosening of identity moorings and markers allows for a fluid model of identification with various places, various homes, whereby people articulate a multilayered, ‘hybrid’ identity that affirms the duality of their experience of self and home, oscillating between places ‘here’ and ‘there’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Corcoran and Share 2008; Easthope 2009; Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2007; Walter 2004, 2006; Yau 2007).

This research on the various connections between home and identity is directly relevant to my research. In Chapter 7 I suggest that some participants’ (re)settlement experiences represent an attempt to ground a sense of self to home upon return. For others, however, the homecoming experience frustrates identification with home, leading some participants to articulate an identity crisis upon return. For others still, return elicits the articulation of a model of identity not as an endpoint but rather as a process that emerges out of context-specific interaction with home.

2.3.2 Migrants’ identifications with home

The decentring and destabilizing of identification away from the notion of a singular, authentic home is, arguably, more evident for migrants (Paspastergiadis 1998, 2001). As they maintain contacts across international borders, migrants’ identity formation is not necessarily tied to a unique home (Amit-Talai 1998; Bagnoli 2007; Kong 1999; Lam and Yeoh 2004; Lavie and Swedenburgh 1996). One implication of migration is that contemporary migrants continuously negotiate identities between ‘old’ and ‘new’ worlds, forging novel configurations of identification with home in

both places (Appadurai 1996). In this context, the burgeoning research area of transnationalism is a keyword when studying this process of identity formation. Transnationalism – albeit a heterogeneous term covering a vast array of practices, social morphologies, types of consciousness, and so on – is defined here as the social, cultural, economic, political and personal links forged by migrants themselves between diaspora and their homelands. While the notion of migrant transnationalism has numerous historical precedents and parallels, scholars argue that what is new about contemporary forms of transnationalism is the intensity and scale of today's migrants' exchanges and connections between their host and home societies. Rather than movement from one place to another uprooting or deterritorializing migrants' identities – as has been intimated – what scholars witness among contemporary migrants is a strengthening and deepening of ties to both sending and receiving contexts. While not all migrants display transnational identities, numerous recent studies suggest a general and durable re-orientation of the migrant *habitus*, whereby old- and new-world values are conceptualized together to transform identities, transform homes (Haller and Landolt 2005; Levitt 2001; Levitt and Waters 2002). One revealing example of this is Ruba Salih's (2003) research on Moroccan women living in Italy. Focussing on their cooking practices, Salih shows how these women fuse elements of both countries' cuisines to symbolize their double identities in homes 'here' and 'there'. When in Italy, the women mix traditional Italian recipes with imported Moroccan ingredients to enliven the dishes; and conversely, returning to Morocco for holidays, Italian goods are used in the preparation of local Moroccan meals. Rather than seeing the women's identities in relation to specific homes as mutually exclusive, Salih demonstrates how the meaning of home is defined through interactive transnational identifications with homes stretched across geographically remote places.

This research on migrants' transnational identities shows how home is simultaneously lived both 'here' and 'there'. However, a focus on migrants' border-spanning linkages that maintain multiple identities to more than one home runs the risk of overlooking the complex ways in which migrants negotiate settlement in their new places of residence. Steven Vertovec (2009) points out that much of twentieth-century migration scholarship concentrated on the ways in which migrants adapted to

their new environments – a process variously labelled as assimilation, integration, incorporation, or insertion. Vertovec (2009) argues that early work on transnationalism often emerged as a response to the dominance of this assimilation paradigm, and therefore focused on the neglected cross-border aspects of migrants' everyday lives and selves. For Vertovec and others (Ehrkamp 2005; Kivisto 2003; Morawska 2004; Nagel 2002; Nagel and Staeheli 2004; Portes et al. 1999; Staeheli and Nagel 2006, 2008; Yeoh and Huang 2000), this early transnational migration scholarship – while offering a productive way of engaging with migrants' powerful attachments to homes and selves elsewhere – resulted in a lack of attention to migrants' ongoing struggles in their host societies. In this light, more recent research aims to advance understandings of transnationalism by considering how migrants maintain transnational connections *while* at the same time assimilating to their host societies (Bommes 2005). As Kivisto (2003, 19) puts it, “transnational immigration and assimilation/incorporation . . . need to be seen as interrelated.”

A renewed focus on migrants' assimilative practices in their current homes shows how transnational practices may, in fact, facilitate and strengthen local integration (Portes 1999a, 1999b). Numerous recent studies show that rather than sustained transnational connections mitigating or weakening assimilation to the host environment, it is often the case that migrants' dual orientations and identifications with both home and host countries enhance assimilation in local spaces (Bailey 2002; Cohen and Sirkeci 2005; Jayawerra and Choudhury 2008; Snel et al. 2006; Staeheli and Nagel 2006). Staeheli and Nagel's (2006) research on Arab-American activists in the United States illustrates this connection between the maintenance of transnational ties and the enabling of local assimilation. In an effort to combat the stigma associated with Muslim populations in the United States post-9/11, the Arab-American activists spoke of how their complex identities to multiple homes enriched their sense of Americanness. Staeheli and Nagel's respondents saw no incompatibility or felt no need to abandon their Arab identities in order to claim an identity as American in the United States. In fact, these Arab-American activists suggest that their multiple identifications with plural homes serves as a way of making them better Americans.

Of course, this is not migrants' only answer to the relationship between transnationalism and assimilation. Not all migrants maintain the same level or types of transnational connections, and their patterns of integration to the host society vary significantly. A number of studies show that maintaining contact with places of origin in some instances serves as an adaptive response to the hostile or unreceptive host context that migrants often find themselves in (Levitt and Jaworsky 2007; Sana 2005; Tai 2009). Limited migrant integration may encourage transnational identifications with homes elsewhere, helping migrants to cope with the hardships of their new settings. The home country therefore forms an important component of migrants' identities – with the implication that such transnational identities may, at times, hinder or even prevent their integration on the ground. A good example of the ways in which transnational identification may impede assimilation in the new environment is given in Cohen and Sirkeci's (2005) account of Turkish-Kurds living in Germany. According to the authors' evidence, one outcome of sustained transnational activity is that Turkish-Kurds have limited interaction in Germany with non-Turkish-Kurds. This results in the formation of Turkish-Kurd ethnic-enclaves or ghetto-like neighbourhoods in Germany, and instead of creating new opportunities or integration, their cross-border identifications serve to reproduce existing economic and social inequalities between migrant and host society members.

The studies cited so far in this section show how migrants' identifications with homes play out in various and often unpredictable ways in relation to two important concepts in migration research: transnationalism and assimilation. What recent studies show, in effect, is that taken in isolation neither transnationalism nor assimilation tells the whole story of the migration process. Transnationalism, for its part, is not merely a case of forging links and identifications with the country left behind, while assimilation is not a linear trajectory of shedding and irrevocably sundering connections with the place of origin in order to identify totally with the host country. When conceived of as working in tandem and as co-existing processes, transnationalism *and* assimilation offer nuanced conceptual tools for researching migrants' identifications with home. Frequently absent from these accounts, however, is an explicit appreciation that migrants' multiple, hybrid and dynamic identifications with home may continue to idealize a stable identity with a fixed

home (Pratt 1999; Tolia-Kelly 2006). In other words, missing from much research on migrants' fluid identifications with home is a sense of how the meaning of home incorporates both a lived and longed-for state. The articulation of a fragmented, partial and fluid identity does not preclude the yearning for an integrated, whole and stable identification with home (Varley 2008; Young 1997). Research on migrants' unfixed identities should reflect the continued salience of a singular and fixed model of identification with home as interwoven and implicated in their complex narratives of self.

The literature examining migrants' multiple identifications with home is especially relevant to the current thesis. This is particularly evident in Chapter 7 of the current thesis, where I analyse participants' narratives of identity upon homecoming. Foundational accounts of home as the origin of identity are destabilized in Chapter 7, as the analysis of participants' narratives reveals a more flexible and hybrid identification with home upon return. The analysis I present in Chapter 7 develops current literature on migrants' identities insofar it shows that participants' composite identity narratives in the current thesis do not necessarily forgo the ideal of an integrated identity with home. While the actual homecoming may not coincide with its idealized form, participants at the same time retain the imaginary of a fixed identity amidst the lived reality of multiple and dynamic identities in the post-return context.

2.3.3 Return migrants' identifications with home

One area of research that explicitly addresses this idealized aspect of home relates to the identification processes of return migrants. While international migrants may be adept at negotiating selves simultaneously in homes 'here' and 'there', this does not obviate the desire of some migrants to pin-down the slippery and elusive nature of identifying with a discreetly-defined home. Much research on return migration stresses how the return move is in many instances constructed as a search for a stable sense of self in a world often characterised as in flux (Conway 2005). Numerous studies examining what motivates migrants' desires to return to their ancestral homeland suggests that it is the ongoing instability of identity in diaspora – the

ongoing distinction “between dwelling on and in a place” (Basu 2007, ix) – that ultimately drives the homeward journey, as the quest to find an authentic sense of self is allied to the act of ‘coming home’ (Christou 2002, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; Wessendorf 2007).

Research on the genealogical identities of ‘roots tourists’ returning to their ancestors’ homeland highlights how the return journey is often akin to a sacred pilgrimage, as these post-secular ‘pilgrims’ rummage around the ruins and graveyards of their families’ histories (Cheng 2004; Nash 2002, 2008). Paul Basu (2001, 2007), in his study of the Scottish diaspora returning to the Scottish Highlands, asks: what is it that, in the first instance, these returnees are looking for; and second, what do they find among the debris of ancient croft houses and graves of relatives personally unknown to them? Basu (2007) argues that answering these questions goes to the heart of issues concerning people’s growing anxieties about the related processes of globalization, localization, mobility, transnationalism and identity formation. Basu (2007) suggests that there is, among some Scottish genealogical tourists at least, a reterritorializing impulse towards ‘hunting down home’ in an effort to affirm otherwise insecure diasporic identities. Basu (2007, 220) finds evidence to support the argument that practises of family history research, somewhat counterintuitively, are not intrinsically about the past, but are in fact much more concerned with the present, whereby roots tourists “continue to ‘centre themselves’ in a notion of home that is itself centred on the specific spatial and temporal coordinates of homeland.”

A further strand of the return migration literature looks at the implications for identity once the homecoming is realized. These studies highlight an emergent dissonance between the expectations and the realities of return, leading many returnees to underscore the ambivalence of identifications with home in the post-return context (Black and Khoser 1999; Constable 1999, 2004; Conway and Potter 2009; Hammond 2004; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2000, 2001, 2003; Long and Oxfeld 2004; Markowitz and Stefansson 2004; Ní Laoire 2007, 2008a, 2008b). As a number of studies demonstrate, returnees often consider the possibilities of re-emigration once the complex reality of returning is recognised, suggesting a revision of the idealized model of homecoming as restoration of a fixed identification with

home for many (Abdelhady 2008; Baldassar 1997; Ley and Kobayashi 2005; Lidgard and Gilson 2002; Tsuda 2001, 2003). One study by Mary Corcoran (2003) examines the self-identities of Irish-born return migrants upon homecoming. Corcoran (2003, 11) argues that her respondents formulate the homecoming as a “quest for anchorage”. The gap that emerges, however, between the dream and the reality of return results in disenchantment among many of her respondents. This leads some to revise their self-identities upon return and articulate a liminal status as both insiders and outsiders.

The relationship between home and identification constitutes a further conceptual pivot for unpacking the messiness of home’s meanings. The literature on return migrants’ sense of self in relation to home is especially useful for the current thesis. While return may rekindle the binding ties between home and self, at the same time it can call for a more complex reworking of the relationship between the two. Participants’ multiple identifications with home(s) suggest a destabilizing and decentring of self away from a foundational home upon homecoming. Nevertheless, their parallel craving for a centred identity suggests the ongoing significance of an idealized model of a fixed home in influencing returnees’ sense of self.

2.4 Geographies of home and belonging

Building on Blunt and Varley’s (2004) framework for analysing home, the third and final dominant dimension of home that I examine is that of belonging. The dimension of belonging offers a useful entry point into interrogating home, as it trains the analytical lens explicitly on the social side of home. Belonging has two related aspects: the subjectively- and the socially-defined. The subjective side of belonging is in many respects synonymous with aspects of home’s dimensions of location and identification. The ways in which people describe a sense of fitting in ‘at home’ shares several characteristics with peoples’ sense of place or location discussed in Section 2.2. The complex models of identification with home described in Section 2.3 overlap in important ways with peoples’ articulations of multiple and ambivalent senses of belonging. This section stands out insofar as the emphasis falls on scrutinizing the social definition of home.

Thus, in this section I focus on literature that examines the social side of belonging in relation to home. Through the review of relevant literatures, I suggest that part of the meaning of home for people is influenced by the ways in which others ascribe or categorise them as belonging (or not) to home. In this section I argue that the distinction between the real and the idealized aspects of home is most evident in relation to the dimension of belonging. Following Probyn (1996), a number of authors argue that belonging is composed of a lived tension between ‘be-ing’ and ‘longing’, a present and a desired state (Bell 1999; Hedetoft 2004; Ilcan 2002). The ‘being’ of belonging relates to the ways in which others label and reify certain people as positioned either inside or outside the boundaries of home. The longing of belonging, however, relates to people’s own yearnings and ideals of membership, and refers to the often-contested, uncertain, fragile and shifting boundaries of home (Ehrkamp 2006). The latter aspect of belonging means that normative constructions of belonging to home are never settled, and peoples’ capacity to belong is, therefore, forever changing. This literature has a direct relevance to the current thesis, as participants’ articulations of ‘fitting in’ upon return are influenced by others’ accounts of them. In this section I argue, moreover, that the distinction between the lived and the desired meanings of home are nowhere more evident than in the dimension of belonging.

2.4.1 The internal-external/self-other dialectic of belonging

Not only inclusion, but also the experience of exclusion (from national, domestic, institutional, socio-cultural formations, and so on) in many instances raises the question of belonging. Rather than belonging simply fostering warm feelings of fellowship to various peoples, places and cultures – which it undoubtedly does – for many the inability to participate in mainstream societal practices prompts questions about affiliation and the social gluing of groups (Anthias; 2001, 2002, 2008; Hedetoft and Hjort 2002; Lovell 1998; Pearce 2000). In a number of recent studies, the nature of contemporary belonging is shown to be inflected as much with contours of familiarity as it is estrangement (Neal and Walters 2006; Savage et al. 2005). This

experience of exclusion is often pointedly the case for migrants' encounters with members of their host societies (Bauman 1995, 2001; Bromley 2000; Kristeva 1991). Numerous studies show how migrants' bonds of belonging are influenced by the ways in which members of the host societies' dominant group impose categories of belonging upon them (Ehrkamp and Leitner 2006; Nash 2008; Salih 2003; Yuval-Davis 2006; Valentine et al. 2009). These studies foreground the issue that belonging is never entirely about migrants' subjective feelings of 'fitting in' or not, but also relates to how (powerful) others define who belongs to home according to specific spatial norms and expectations (Castles and Davidson 2000; Crowley 1999; Dieckhoff 2004; Ilcan 2002). In these studies, while individual migrants may define themselves as feeling 'at home' in a particular place or places, self-definitions of belonging are partly dependent on being recognized by others for their legitimacy (Valentine et al. 2009). It is not sufficient to claim membership of a particular home; that membership must be validated by the wider community or group to which one aspires to belong. In other words, belonging is only fully defined for the migrant through interaction with dominant others, but involves an ongoing internal-external dialectic of self-definitions and definitions of oneself offered by others (Jenkins 2008). Both moments, of self- and other-categorization, feed back on one another in the process of defining belonging. Gill Valentine et al.'s (2009) research comparing the integration experiences of Somali immigrants in Denmark and the UK is a good illustration of this two-way process of belonging. The migration and life histories of both Somali communities share many similarities, yet levels of belonging to their respective host communities diverge significantly. For the Somalis in Denmark, the state policy of dispersing the new arrivals throughout local Danish communities results in high levels of interaction between natives and newcomers. Somalis quickly learn Danish to near-fluency, and readily adopt Danish markers of belonging in terms of dress, food and popular culture tastes. Nevertheless, Valentine et al.'s respondents register intense feelings of exclusion as a result of narrow state policy definitions of Danishness based on whiteness and secularism. The pressure to conform to normative codes of Danishness asphyxiates migrants' own Somali-Muslim affiliations. At the same time, the absence of a robust Somali culture in Denmark deprives them of the anchoring influence of their homeland's customs and traditions,

leaving them so remote from both Denmark and Somalia that they seriously consider secondary migration elsewhere. By contrast, the British-based Somalis display much stronger senses of belonging to Britain, despite the fact that they are often unable to speak English, and remain largely excluded from mainstream British life. It is the strength of Somalis' local attachments in their so-called 'segregated communities' and a feeling of greater freedom to enact and perform Somali-Muslim practices in Britain that means they are much more 'at home' in diaspora in comparison to their compatriots living in Denmark. The highly prescriptive approach of the Danish state towards immigrants means that policy efforts to reduce migrants' affiliations to narrow categories of belonging weakens rather than strengthens their ties to the national community. British integration policy, meanwhile, offers Somalis a looser interpretative framework within which to define what belonging to Britain and Britishness means to them, resulting in real local attachments, at the same time as they maintain membership of their country of origin.

In other words, belonging to home emerges out of entwined social processes of incorporation and exclusion that are partly self-defined, partly other-defined. This internal-external dialectic defining home, moreover, is in many cases predicated on an interplay of 'sameness' and 'difference' around the boundaries of who belongs to home, and who does not (Benhabib 1999; Madsen and van Naerssen 2003; Yeoh and Huang 2000). This means that part of the reason a person may be incorporated into any particular group or community stems from the fact that s/he shares certain criteria of similarity or 'sameness' with other members of the collectivity. Conversely, part of the reason a person may be excluded from belonging to the group results from in-group members categorizing her/him as different (and often inferior) and thereby not the same as 'them' (Pred 2000). This process of recruiting and excluding based on the perceived sameness and difference of in- and out-group members respectively works both within and between groups (Jenkins 2008). Put otherwise, similar processes of belonging occur in intra-group as well as inter-group incorporation and exclusion. These processes, however, are arguably more evident for migrants, as they negotiate belonging intersubjectively in their new environments.

Many studies examine the ways in which migrants are constructed as not belonging to particular spaces because of their perceived difference from the mainstream members of their host society (Ehrhamp 2006; Gilmartin 2008; Gilmartin and White 2008; Magat 1999; Neal and Walters 2006). Migrants, because they often fail to meet normative expectations of behaviour, language, appearance, dress, eating habits, and countless other context-dependent etiquettes, are therefore perceived and discursively constructed as different by dominant others (Favell 1998; Noble 2002, 2005; Read 2000). The migrant does not belong because s/he is in some respect markedly different from 'us'. The migrant's difference or foreignness excludes her/him, while simultaneously evoking and reinforcing the shared similarities between members of the in-group (Koefoed and Simonsen 2007). A number of studies show how various techniques and tactics of categorizing and labelling migrants positions and marginalizes them as alien to and outside the boundaries of belonging to 'us', which at the same time brings the host society's shared commonalities or sameness into focus (Neal and Walters 2006; Baubock 1994; Benhabib 1999; Madsen and van Naerssen 2003; Yeoh and Huang 2000).

Other studies, however, examine the ways in which migrants are understood as the same as 'us' (Braakman and Schlenkhoff 2007; Devlin Trew 2007; Fortier 2001; Lucas and Purkayastha 2007). Rather than focusing on migrants' alleged difference from the host society, the emphasis falls on their degree of similarity to members of the dominant societal group. Numerous studies examine how migrants, based on a perception of sameness, are recruited to the in-group and are understood as assimilated and belonging within the boundaries of the host society (Germann-Molz and Gibson 2007; Nash 2002). In many such cases, the onus falls on migrants to blend with the host societies' normative expectations, and through the gradual adoption of host society characteristics (language, accent, dress, consumption and lifestyle patterns, intermarriage with the dominant group, and so on) various subgroups are understood to, more or less, become the same as 'us' (Alba and Nee 1997; Gordon 1964; Gray 2006a; Kivisto 2003). This emphasis on 'sameness', emanating largely from US assimilation theory, examines the processes through

which migrants come to resemble, conform and accommodate to the mainstream society's dominant norms (Nagel 2002). In this view, by shedding their old world mannerisms and practices, migrants are, by degrees, absorbed into the host society culture in a teleological fashion.

Taken together, then, these debates highlight how belonging encompasses notions of sameness and difference within groups, but especially between non-migrant and migrant groups. The construction of sameness and difference works together in order to position migrants as belonging or not to home. Yet, echoing Nagel and Staeheli's (2005) concerns over discussions about assimilation and citizenship, one problem with these debates is that they often imagine belonging as an either/or condition, an all-or-nothing state. One either belongs, or one does not. As Nagel and Staeheli (2005, 489) claim, discussion of migrants' sameness to and difference from the host society often fails to examine how "immigrants and other marginalized groups often move between sameness and difference in ways that challenge those constructions." The ways in which dominant others label migrants as the same as or different from mainstream society may be internalized by individual migrants in whole or in part. At the same time, such external categorization of migrants' familiarity to or strangeness from dominant social groups may provoke resistance on migrants' behalf. Acts of non-conformity to norms of belonging are important because they foreground migrants' own practices of belonging that may emerge in the interplay of sameness and difference. Numerous studies examine how migrants' articulations of home unsettle the stability of belonging as something natural or possessed by certain groups (Ehrkamp 2005, 2006; Salih 2000; Yuval-Davis 2006). These studies highlight how migrants' yearnings to belong inject a movement of desire into belonging to "consider forms of belonging outside of the divisiveness of categorizing" (Probyn 1996, 10). Drawing on Probyn's (1996) theorizing of belonging, a number of studies examine how the term belonging consists of two interrelated states: that of 'be'-ing, and that of 'longing' (Bell 1999; Feldman 2008; Mee and Wright 2009; Savage et al. 2005). The focus of these studies is on the latter aspect, the longing that belonging implies. While the be-ing element of belonging focuses on the performance and reiteration of normalized codes of belonging, recent

studies show how migrants' longings suggest an alternative mode of membership that goes beyond rigid categories of belonging and non-belonging (Braakman and Schlenkhoff 2007; Fortier 1999, 2001; Moreton-Robinson 2003; Walsh 2006a, 2006b; Yuval-Davis et al. 2005).

This literature pertains directly to the current thesis. As will be discussed in Chapter 8, many participants' understandings of home are mediated through their interactions with members of the mainstream Irish population. The mainstream Irish population, following Feldman (2008), is defined as Irish-born persons, who are white, settled and of the Catholic faith. In other words, as I demonstrate in Chapter 8, participants' ideas of home may be shaped by the ways in which mainstream Irish society categorizes or labels return migrants as belonging or not upon homecoming. As participants negotiate (re)settlement, the discursive positioning of return migrants as either the same as or different from the dominant group may, intentionally or not, effect their feelings of belonging upon return.

2.4.2 Return migrants' sameness and difference

If migrants' experiences of negotiating sameness and difference in their host societies highlight the influence of others in defining belonging, then, arguably, return migrants' settlement experiences in their old/new environments pinpoint these processes. Numerous studies examine how return migrants are influenced by the ways in which dominant others construct them as the same as members of their country of origin by virtue of their shared nationality, language, culture, past experiences of living in the country, and so on (Christou 2006a; King and Christou 2008). Others studies, however, investigate how return migrants respond to the ways in which dominant others construct them as different by dint of their changed expectations, accents, accumulation of social and financial capital in diaspora, and so on (Gmelch 1980, 1986; Stepputat 1994; Takenaka 1999).

These categorizations of return migrants as both the same and different from resident members of their home counties influence returnees' articulations of belonging in

complex ways. Widespread normative expectations that return migrants should belong to their country of origin – their home – may effect the range of possible affiliations that returnees articulate (Markowitz and Stefansson 2004). At the same time, assumptions and stereotypes about return migrants as different from the majority population of the country of origin may impinge negatively on returnees' capacity to belong to home (Tsuda 2001). Some research shows how this labelling of return migrants as both similar to and distinct from mainstream society positions them as in-between the normative boundaries of belonging, at once insiders and outsiders (Christou 2006a, 2006b; Lorenzo-Hernandez 1999).

What is often muffled in much of this research, however, is an examination of how returnees themselves reconfigure and remake dominant ideas of sameness and difference, of who belongs and who does not, in an effort to articulate an alternate model of belonging in the post-return context. In other words, existing research on return migrants often fails to appreciate how returnees reformulate ascribed notions of sameness and difference to contest these categories. An exception is Caitríona Ní Laoire's (2008a) research on Irish return migration. Ní Laoire argues that popular discourses of Irish society are often structured by basic dualisms that pit a native, settled, Irish-born community against a newly-arrived, immigrant, foreign community. Ní Laoire uses return migrants' own understandings to challenge these opposing binaries and highlight how her respondents constantly move between shifting positions as native and newcomer, insider and outsider. While dominant discourses of belonging remain influential in (re)producing normative patterns of affinity and antipathy, as Nash (2008, 266) states, "local currencies of nation, race, ethnicity, or native belonging are not absolutely overdetermining. People differently situate their own explorations of ancestry and identity in relation to the wider politics of belonging."

The literature on return migrants' belongings pertains directly to the current thesis. As I argue in detail in Chapter 8, participants' narratives show that affiliation to and solidarity with home arises in complex ways upon return. Confronted with (and often confounded by) questions about who authentically belongs to home and who does

not, participants often find themselves positioned by others as belonging both inside and outside the boundaries of home in ambiguous, paradoxical ways. Nevertheless, many participants do not simply accept their ascribed place in relation to the perimeters of belonging, but respond to and contest narrow definitions of social membership – and therefore of home – upon homecoming. Their active negotiation of codes of sameness and difference disrupts and blurs the boundaries between insiders and outsiders, instead suggesting a more progressive and inclusive model of belonging upon homecoming.

2.5 Conclusion

From the vast range of studies reviewed in this chapter, it is evident that the use of home as an analytic tool to understand a myriad of individual and social phenomena is popular in the social sciences. Nevertheless, seldom is the concept defined in a specific way when applied to particular case studies. This conceptual imprecision is partly overcome, I suggested throughout this chapter, by adopting Blunt and Varley's tripartite typology of analysing home from the perspective of its dominant dimensions of location, identification, and belonging.

Section 2.2 reviewed literature that considers the dimension of location and its relationship with the concept of home. I showed that while home expands and connects various places and locales, this does not necessarily reduce the longing for a more territorialized and locationally discreet idea of home. In other words, home may be experienced and lived translocally, but an idealized model of home as uniquely located persists. Thus, the lived and the longed-for aspects of home are conceptualised as necessary counterparts rather than opposing binaries. While the dual meaning of home is often evident for migrants in diaspora, this tension between the real and the ideal interpretation of home translates explicitly to the old/new environments that return migrants inhabit. A focus on this tension between the actual and the desired (re)settlement experiences of return migrants offers a unique entry point into making sense of the simultaneity of home's uprooted and grounded aspects.

Section 2.3 reviewed literature that focuses on the dimension of identification and how it relates to home. Fluid, complex and multiple identities disrupt foundational accounts of home as the origin of an authentic and fixed self, without necessarily weakening the yearning for an integrated identification with home. Understanding identity as an emergent and shifting process rather than as the essence of a core self highlights the flexibility and multiplicity of identifications with home. Nonetheless, the longing for a sutured, stable and centred identity runs concurrent to its contingent aspects, as home continues to be imagined as the source and origin of self. Return migrants' (re)settlement experiences exemplify these paradoxical features of identification, as the dissonance between the expectations and the realities of homecoming accentuates this paradoxical nature of home in contemporary societies.

In the final section of the chapter I reviewed literature that examines the ways in which the dimension of belonging intersects with the notion of home. In Section 2.4 I suggested that the dimension of belonging offers a productive approach for interrogating home. Belonging shifts the emphasis away from individuals' subjective sense-making efforts, instead stressing how home is also defined by the ways in which others ascribe or categorise one as belonging (or not) to a particular home. Home's meaning is partly influenced by the ways in which others label one as either the same as or different from members of the dominant societal in-group. Perceiving someone as the same as 'us' positions them within the boundaries of belonging to home, while constructing them as different places them beyond the bounds of social membership. The tension between the lived and longed-for meanings of home are nowhere more evident than in its dimension of belonging, however. The discursive labelling of one as either the same as or different from the dominant social group is not internalized in an uncontested manner, as people respond to, negotiate and formulate alternate models of belonging to home. While others' categorizing of one as the same or different are important in understanding home's meaning, the longing that the term 'belonging' implies suggests the fragility and instability of static categories that seek to define the terms of social membership. Return migrants represent an apposite group for examining home's dimension of belonging. Their shared commonalities with and observable differences from the majority population of their country of origin offer a useful entry point into investigating the interplay

between sameness and difference in defining who belongs to home and who does not. I suggested that return migrants' own understandings of affiliation begin to challenge normative expectations surrounding belonging.

This review of home's dominant dimensions of location, identification and belonging allows my research to analyse the range of entangled meanings that participants attach to the notion of home. At the level of experience, home's messiness is not in doubt. People experience home, almost by definition, as a bundle of sensations, feelings and beliefs related to their memories of the past, current circumstances in the present, and hopes for themselves and their loved-ones in the future. However, without a precise framework for unpacking these clustered and sometimes contradictory meanings, the conceptual work that home can do in illuminating often obscure areas of experience risks being reduced. Using the conceptual framework developed in this chapter, the analysis I present in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8 aims to uncover some of the blended layers of meaning that participants give to the notion of home upon (re)settlement. Before examining this material, however, it is important to consider the background to recent Irish migration and return. Therefore, the following chapter discusses in detail the historical context surrounding recent Irish return migration from the United States, providing a socio-cultural backdrop within which to place participants' narratives of home in the second part of the thesis.

Chapter 3 Situating Irish emigration, settlement and return

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter I look at the history of Irish emigration and return. Through an examination of Census reports, as well as analysis of various media, government and policy statements on Irish migration, I place the topic of Irish population movements into a broad historical context. The aim of this chapter is to contextualize my research and to introduce key issues that have informed participants' negotiation and articulation of home in the post-return context. Return migrants' (re)settlement experiences cannot be considered as entirely framed by the various media and government perspectives on Irish migration, but neither can their return be fully understood in isolation from this particular contextual background.

I begin with an examination of the Census reports of the Central Statistics Office (CSO) to provide a general overview of the Republic of Ireland's recent migration trends. While precise figures are difficult to pin-down, specific attention is given to the case of Irish immigration to the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s. I then examine the figures involved in the recent return of Irish-born migrants, with particular attention paid to those coming back from the United States. Following this, perspectives on Irish emigration are examined, charting the shifts in public representations of the country's diaspora throughout the 1980s and 1990s. The next section explores 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland, looking briefly at the country's recent socio-economic transformations. I then examine government and media viewpoints on recent return migration to the Republic of Ireland. Tracing the various portrayals of homecoming in government and media accounts shows the complex and often-contradictory positions occupied by return migrants in the public imagination.

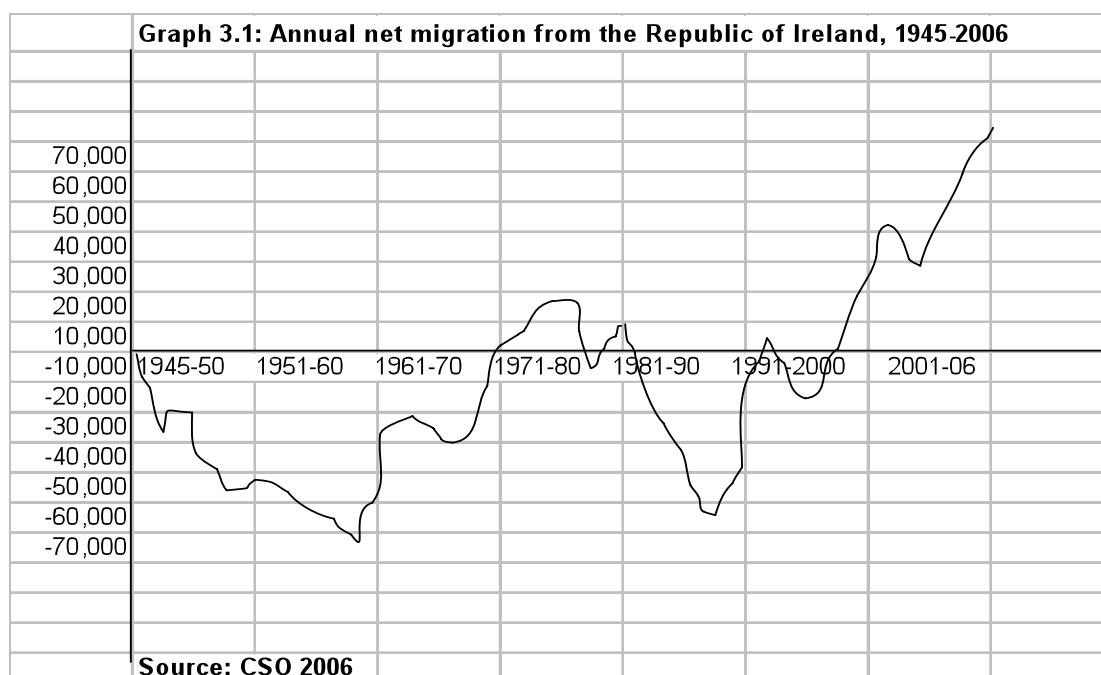
3.2 The Republic of Ireland's recent migration patterns

Before outlining the Republic of Ireland's recent migration patterns, it is important to mention that all figures referred to are only estimates. The state does not officially monitor the flow of people arriving and departing. Population changes are estimated by the state using data collected from Censuses conducted every four years.

Nevertheless, the figures collated in the Census reports, and then analysed and broken-down into various categories by CSO, provide a reliable overview of the country's demographic patterns, and highlight some characteristics of and information relating to the recent in-flow of Irish-born return migrants.

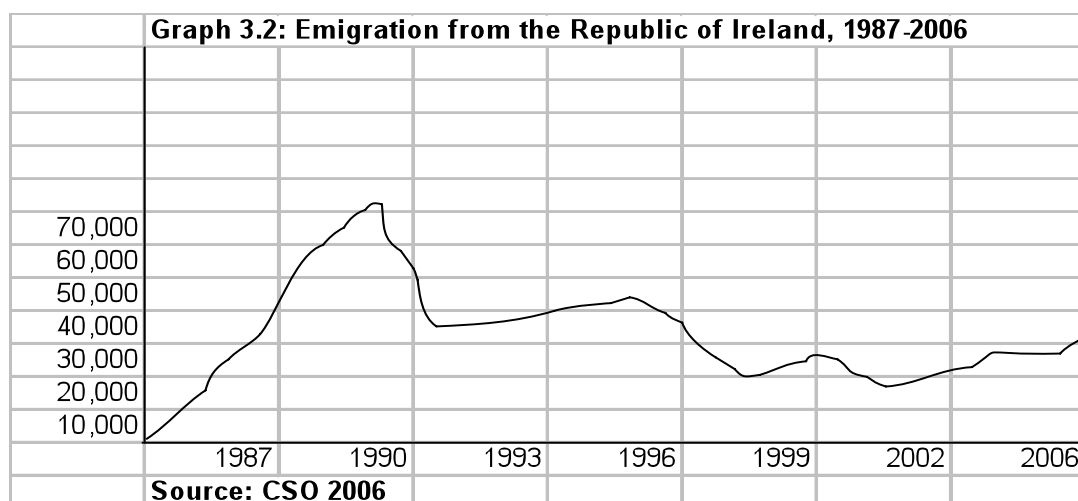
3.2.1 Emigration from the Republic of Ireland

From the Great Famine of the 1840s until the 1950s, the Republic of Ireland witnessed some of the highest and most sustained per capita rates of emigration in Europe (Akenson 1993; Miller 1985). Immigration into Ireland during this period was virtually non-existent, with the exception of occasional labour migrants, an extremely limited number of family reunification programmes for foreign nationals, as well as a small number of refugee resettlement schemes following the Second World War (Mac Einri and White 2008). The 1970s mark an exception to the general trend in Irish migration flows, as the decade saw a sustained period of positive net migration for the first time in the state's fifty-year history (see Graph 3.1). Economic prospects improved throughout the decade, which reduced the number of emigrants leaving, and increased the number of Irish-born nationals returning to the Republic of Ireland (Ní Laoire 2007).



This was followed by a major economic recession throughout the 1980s (Mac Laughlin 1994), however, and the resultant constraint on the labour market meant that high levels of emigration resumed (see Graph 3.2). It has been estimated that in excess of 70,600 – or two per cent of the entire population – left in 1988/1989 alone (see Graph 3.2). With the resumption of large-scale emigration in the 1980s, it was the 15-24 years-old age group that was most heavily affected, and the majority left for traditional Irish emigrant destinations of the United States and the United Kingdom (CSO 2006). This age cohort has seen the highest losses of any age group throughout the period 1987-2001 (CSO 2002). The 1980s emigrant cohort was labelled a ‘New Wave’ in Irish migration (Mac Laughlin 1994, 1997; Shuttleworth 1997). Previous Irish migratory flows were composed largely of rural and working-class youths, who left to undertake menial labour in the core countries of the global capitalist economy (Delaney 2002). The New Wave of Irish emigrants, however, was represented by political and media pundits as composed of largely urban, middle-class youth taking up employment in high-status occupations in labour markets abroad (Lobo and Salvo 2002). This labelling of 1980s’ Irish emigration as a New Wave is a contested category, however. A survey of emigration from selected regions in the south and west of Ireland by Jim Mac Laughlin (1991), that targeted

over 6,000 emigrant families in the late 1980s, found evidence that conflicts with representations of Irish emigrants as members of an elite globalized labour force. Mac Laughlin's survey results show that over two-thirds of all emigrants had completed second-level education, while graduate emigrants accounted for only one-third of all emigrants in this area. Mac Laughlin (1997) argues that political and media images of 1980s emigration offered a sanitised view of Irish emigration, far removed from the realities of emigrants' lives. Instead, Mac Laughlin (1994, 1997) argued that the much-feted New Wave in Irish emigration was not that different – in terms of its age structure, social composition, geographical destinations and occupational profile – from traditional patterns of Irish emigration. Furthermore, many Irish people migrating to the United States in the late-1980s left without proper visa documentation, thereby adding to the difficulties associated with emigration.



3.2.2 Irish immigration to the United States

The Great Famine in Ireland, *inter alia*, has cast a long legacy over Irish immigration to the United States (Glazier 1999). The latter-half of the nineteenth century saw massive Irish immigration to the United States (Coogan 2002). Over 60 per cent of all Irish-born people living outside Ireland at each Census period between 1850 and 1910 were recorded as living in the United States (Task Force Report 2002). The

numbers dropped dramatically thereafter because the United States introduced national origin quotas in 1921 and 1924 (Luibhead 1997). These curbs on immigration were compounded by the Depression in 1929, which led to a major slump in demand for labour (Walter 2001). Numbers to the United States continued to decline throughout the decades until, in the 1970s, Irish immigration to the United States was recorded at less than 1,000 per year (O' Brien 2002). From a twentieth-century high of an estimated 1,500,000 Irish-born people living in the United States in 1900 (Task Force Report 2002), this figure had fallen to a mere 169,827 in 1990 (see Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Irish-born Population in the United States, 1940-1990

Year	Total
1940	572,031
1950	504,961
1960	338,722
1970	251,375
1980	197,817
1990	169,827

Source: US Census, 1990

As Ireland's prosperity of the 1970s turned to recession in the 1980s, large-scale Irish immigration to the United States resumed (Bielenberg 2000). Between 1987 and 1995 it is estimated that approximately 100,000 Irish-born people immigrated to the United States (Lobo and Salvo 2002). It must be noted, however, that there is a high degree of uncertainty surrounding all of these figures. The presence of large numbers of 'illegal' Irish immigrants in the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s has been well documented (Corcoran 1993; Dowling-Almeida 1992, 2001; Espenshade 1995). Undocumented immigrants are reluctant to divulge the precise circumstances of their sojourn abroad, usually for fear of prosecution by immigration authorities (Chavez 1992; Corcoran 1993). Therefore, any figures relating to

1980s/1990s Irish immigration to the United States must be regarded with caution. If the number of undocumented Irish immigrants could be accounted for, it is likely that the 100,000 figure cited between 1987 and 1995 is, in fact, considerably higher (O' Hanlon 1998). In 1987 the Irish Emigration Reform Movement estimated the number of undocumented Irish in the United States at approximately 135,000 (Corcoran 1993, 35).

Whatever the precise numbers involved, the volume and visibility of Irish people arriving in the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s (by both regular and irregular channels) was so great that the prominent New York-based Irish journalist Ray O' Hanlon (1998) dubbed this cohort the 'New Irish'. This label distinguished them from both older Irish-born immigrants who may have been in the United States for several decades, as well as from the long-established Irish-Americans who were born in the United States and whose families may have lived there for two or three generations. Generally, the New Irish entered the United States in one of two ways. They either visited the United States on short-term tourist or student visas, or they secured visa documentation before their arrival (Luibhead 1997). Many of this cohort of immigrants overstayed their student or tourist visas, and choose to enter the ranks of the United States' 'illegal aliens' (*Economist* 1991).

It was at this time that concerted grassroots campaigns by Irish immigrants and legislative lobbying by the Irish-American community sought to secure visas to legalise the status of some of the undocumented New Irish (Downling-Almeida 2001). The Immigration and Nationality Bill of 1965 (also known as the Hart-Celler Act) was blamed at this time by Irish activists and Irish-American politicians for effectively ending the possibility of legal immigration from Ireland to the United States (Walter 2001). As a result of their campaigning, the Irish-American lobby and Irish immigration activists were highly influential in securing visas for many of the New Irish in the late-1980s/early-1990s (Coogan 2002). The Donnelly Visa programme provided for 10,000 visas annually for two years to be awarded to countries which saw a significant decrease of immigrants to the United States as a result of the Hart-Cellar Act; Ireland was selected as one of these countries (O'

Hanlon 1998). The Immigration Act of 1990 saw the enactment of the Morrison Visa lottery, which provided the greatest windfall of visas for Irish immigrants. The Morrison Visa lottery provided a total of 40,000 visas a year to countries that were ‘adversely affected’ by the 1965 Immigration Act. Ireland secured a minimum of forty per cent of these visas (Corcoran 1993). Through the Irish-American lobby and the work of the Irish Immigration Reform Movement, Irish immigrants were awarded a generous allocation of both the Donnelly and Morrison Visas, and many New Irish immigrants who were initially undocumented in the United States were eventually able to regularise their status by securing one or other of these visas (McCaffrey 1984).

The New Irish were absorbed into *both* elite employment niches and the underclass of unskilled, undocumented employment (Corcoran 1993). There is evidence that considerable numbers of graduate Irish immigrants in the United States found employment in specialized banking and accounting firms at this time (O’ Brien 2002). These multinational firms provided specialised financial services in the global cities of the United States, and employed Irish immigrants through legal means based on their educational and technical qualifications and experience. It is estimated, nevertheless, that the majority of Irish immigrants to the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s were undocumented, and that they found work in low-paid construction, domestic, and service sectors of the economy (Corcoran 1993; Dowling-Almeida 1992, 2001; Lobo and Salvo 2002).

For those undocumented New Irish occupying the lower-rungs of the United States’ economy in New York City, Mary Corcoran’s (1993) study suggests that their legal status forced this sizable population to lead what she defines as ‘transient’ lives between two societies. In other words, Corcoran suggests that her participants were caught between two worlds. On the one hand, they lacked the documentation required to integrate into the United States’ socio-economic mainstream, and on the other, they were unable to remain permanently in the recession-hit Republic of Ireland. Corcoran refuses to use the term ‘emigration’ to describe her participants’ status, arguing that the legal ambiguity surrounding many of the New Irish

immigrants' residency status resulted in their continual shuttling between the United States and the Republic of Ireland. Therefore the term 'transient' more accurately describes their sojourn abroad (Corcoran 1993).

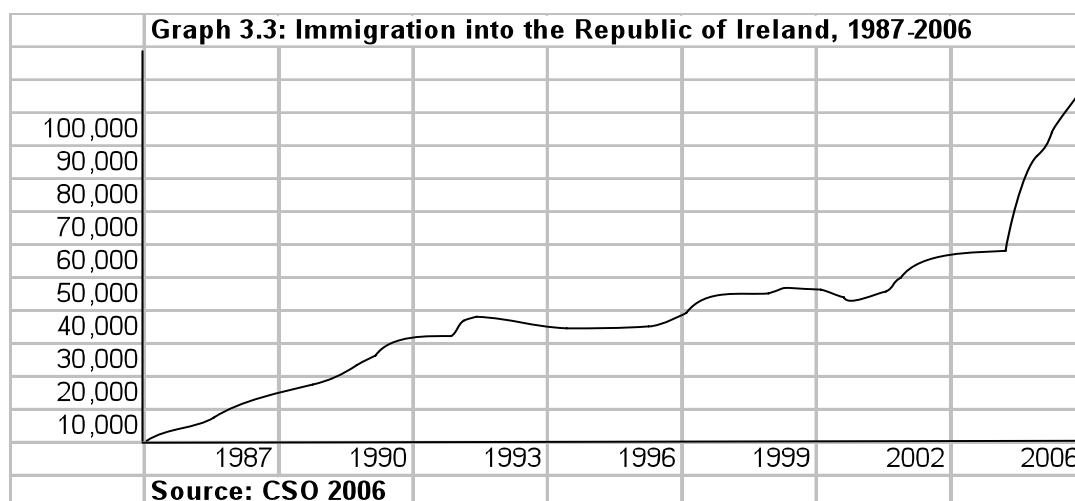
Similarly, Linda Dowling-Almeida's (1992, 247) survey of 247 undocumented Irish newcomers to New York City found that they experienced insurmountable difficulties in integrating that they resisted "the notion that their adopted country will become their permanent home". Basic everyday concerns such as access to a bank account, driver's licence and health care, as well as the option to return home on holidays or for emergencies (for fear of not gaining re-entry at immigration upon return to the United States), remained largely beyond the reach of undocumented New Irish immigrants. This often resulted in their self-imposed social isolation in Irish-dominated neighbourhoods, as they remained aloof from mainstream American society for fear of being reported to immigration authorities who posed the threat of deportation.

Matthew O' Brien's (2002) research, however, offers an alternative explanation of the perceived 'transience' of the New Irish in the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s. He examined the new arrivals' relationship with the established Irish-American community, and found that the latter group held very different ideas about the United States than those of the New Irish. According to O' Brien, the distinguishing feature of traditional Irish-America was a strong assimilationist bias towards the United States. O' Brien argues, however, that regardless of their legal status, the vast majority of the New Irish never really intended their immigration as a permanent move. The true novelty of this cohort was "a fundamental redefinition of the international migration experience among young Irish men and women" (O' Brien 2002, 128). This 'fundamental redefinition' is an understanding of emigration as a temporary experience, whereby life and work experience are gained abroad before the return home. This reluctance on behalf of the New Irish to resettle permanently, argues O' Brien, marks a qualitative shift in attitudes among Irish immigrants to the United States. This argument that the New Irish's transience is more an aesthetic or voluntary position than an enforced hiatus is supported by the

fact that large numbers of visas earmarked for the Irish went unclaimed throughout the 1990s.

3.2.3 Return migration to the Republic of Ireland

The well-documented flow of emigrants from the Republic of Ireland was occluded in recent years as positive net migration became one of the most remarkable features of the country between 1996-2006 (see Graph 3.1). As a consequence of the Irish economic boom of the mid-1990/early-2000s, employment opportunities arose in several sectors of the economy, and the Republic of Ireland witnessed an unprecedented rise in immigration into the country (Fanning 2007). Positive net migration has been estimated at 341,800 for the period 1996-2006 (see Graph 3.3).



Until recently, Census figures simply provided a picture of net migration. This means that it has been very difficult to disentangle the number of *emigrants* from the number of *immigrants*, as Census data only calculated the balance between the two. With the introduction of more detailed questions on the 2002 and 2006 Censuses, it has become easier to classify the composition of the immigrant population, and thereby disaggregate returning Irish-born nationals from the total stock of immigrants. In the case of returning Irish-born nationals, analysis of the 2002 and

2006 Censuses allows for the collection of information on the numbers of returnees from each age group, the decade during which they returned to live in the Republic of Ireland full-time, and the country from which they returned. The figures presented below for return migrants are the outcome of the changes to the recent Censuses.

Analysis of the most recent 2006 Census data shows that there has long been a trickle of return migration to the Republic of Ireland. Before 1951, a mere 3,045 Irish-born people who had lived abroad at some point returned to live in the Republic of Ireland (see Table 3.2). Between 1951-1971, 42,330 Irish-born people returned to the Republic of Ireland. As mentioned above, it was in the 1970s that the trickle of return migration turned into a more concerted flow, when 49,425 Irish-born people returned to live in Ireland. While the numbers returning throughout the 1980s remained relatively stable – with 49,300 Irish-born returnees – the massive exodus of mainly young Irish emigrants tempered this in-flow. Return migration began in earnest in the next decade, with 128,199 Irish-born people returning during the period 1991-2000. The 2002 Census figures show that the majority of the return flow in the 1990s occurred during the latter half of that decade (CSO 2002). Another large influx of return migrants was recorded for the period 2001-2006, with 79,037 Irish-born people returning to the Republic of Ireland from abroad. The significance of the returnee population becomes clear when it is compared with the total population of the country. By 2006, 11.3 per cent of the country's population were return migrants (CSO 2006). Despite constituting such a significant element of the population, little research exists on the lives and experiences of these return migrants.

Table 3.2: Irish persons who lived outside the State for one year or more, classified by year of returning to Irish Republic, and country of previous residence

Year returned	Total	Country of Previous Residence:		
		UK	US	Other
<i>Before 1951</i>	3,045	2,556	123	366
<i>1951-1960</i>	9,833	7,956	807	1,070
<i>1961-1970</i>	32,497	25,210	3,218	4,069
<i>1971-1980</i>	49,425	37,157	3,707	8,562
<i>1981-1990</i>	49,300	29,957	6,222	13,124
<i>1991-2000</i>	128,199	72,632	16,898	38,664
<i>2001-2006</i>	79,037	31,562	11,021	36,454
<i>Not Stated</i>	23,417	5,186	1,004	17,227
Total	374,753	212,216	43,000	119,537

Source: CSO 2006

In keeping with the general age-profile of other Irish-born returnees, it is estimated that the majority of this group of returnees falls within the 30-45 years-old age group (Ní Laoire 2007). In addition, other research (Barrett and O' Connell 2001) suggests that Irish men tend to emigrate for longer periods than women, and subsequently return at slightly older ages than women.

3.3 Public discussion around Irish emigration

In this section I outline the various strands of public discussion surrounding the topic of Irish emigration during late-1980s/early-1990s. I examine the viewpoints on emigration of the Irish government and media that circulated at the peak of the most recent wave of Irish emigration. In this section I show that there is an observable shift from a ‘stand-off’ to a more ‘hands-on’ approach by government and media towards Irish emigrants. I argue, however, that changing portrayals of emigration should not be seen as mutually exclusive, but that the differing depictions of Irish emigrants are folded into one another. In other words, while certain representations of emigration may be more visible at certain times, remnants of older portrayals do not disappear without trace. This is important, I argue, because various sets of representations of emigration may influence the ideas of home of the particular cohort of emigrants who are the focus of the current thesis. The conflicting viewpoints on Irish emigration emerging from government and media sources can be roughly divided into three categories, each of which jostles with the other for public attention: first, emigration as opportunity; second, emigration as exile; and third, emigration as part of a diasporic consciousness (Gray 2004a). In this section I examine each viewpoint in turn.

Unsurprisingly, the role of changes in the Irish economy in patterns of emigration has framed public discussions on migration since 1945 (Mac Einri and White 2008). Like debates about emigration in other contexts, labour surpluses at home were understood to be lured away by economic opportunities elsewhere (Mac Laughlin 1994). Economic factors alone do not explain the entire story of Irish emigration, however. As mentioned, folded into the economic motives are a number of competing and often-contradictory strands in statements about the most recent wave of Irish emigration (Gray 2004a, 2006a, 2006b). The first strand, emigration as opportunity, emerged in the early-1980s, as members of the Irish ruling elite aimed to fully align the country within the wider global economy (Mac Laughlin 1997;

Nash 2002, 2008). At the height of youth emigration in 1987, the then-Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Lenihan commented on the ‘new’ emigration as follows:

I don’t look on the type of emigration we have today as being in the same category as the terrible emigration of the last century. What we have now is a very literate emigrant who thinks nothing of coming to the United States and going back to Ireland and maybe on to Germany and back to Ireland again ... We regard emigrants as part of our global generation. We should be proud of them. The more they hone their skills and talents in another environment, the more they develop a work ethic in a country like Germany or the US, the better it can be applied in Ireland when they return. After all, we can’t all live on a small island (quoted in Gray 1999, 227).

Lenihan’s statement marks a number of departures from earlier accounts of Irish emigration. Rather than representing emigration through motifs of loss, it is understood in terms of an ‘opportunity’ to seek *lebensraum* abroad. The ‘Ryanair Generation’¹ – a euphemism for the 1980s emigrants – was not seen as perpetually lost to the nation, but were simply sojourning abroad as skilled ambassadors for the nation, before they decided on the possibility of a return to the home country. This perspective was emphatically endorsed a year later by Father John Gavin in an interview with the *Irish Times* in February 1988, when he described the current cohort of Irish emigrants to a journalist as “better educated and more self-confident than any of their predecessors . . . a superior breed of greyhound altogether (Yeates 1988, 15).

A competing perspective, however, that harkened back to portraits of Irish emigrants in the 1940s and ‘50s as in ‘exile’ from their homeland also received much media attention during the late-1980s. In a revealing article in the *Irish Independent* in June

¹ Named after the budget airline, Ryanair, launched in the 1980s, which opened up cheap air travel between Ireland and Europe.

1988 entitled ‘The shame of emigration’, Archbishop of Dublin Desmond Connell stated,

We tell ourselves that emigration today is different from the exodus of the ‘40s and ‘50s that our young people are better educated, better equipped and sure can’t they always get a cheap flight home. The reality is very different, there are jobs but they’re at the rock bottom, accommodation prices are sky high, and there are no safety nets of social security (Heron 1988, 13).

The confidence and cosmopolitanism of some sectors of the Irish diaspora contrasts sharply here with the insecurity of tenure and widespread hardships of other members of the same cohort of emigrants (Mac Laughlin 1994, 1997). In other words, ‘exile’ is not entirely erased from the emigrant’s lexicon as soon as the ‘opportunity’ of emigration comes calling (Condon 2009).

A different view on the phenomenon of the most recent wave of Irish emigration during the 1980s/1990s sees ‘emigration as diasporic’. The use of the term diaspora in relation to Ireland’s emigrant population is most closely associated with the Presidency of Mary Robinson (Gray 1999, 2004a, 2004b; Nash 2002; Walter 2001). In her speeches throughout the 1990s, President Robinson (Quoted in Gray 2004a, 32) pointed out that her duty as President was to represent the state of the Republic of Ireland, but also to represent the “vast community of Irish emigrants” scattered around the globe. President Robinson (Quoted in Gray 2004a, 32-33) instigated a rapprochement of sorts with the emigrant population:

Irishness is not simply territorial. . . . It can be strengthened again if we turn with open minds and hearts to the array of people outside Ireland whom this island is a place of origin . . . emigration is not just a chronicle of contribution and adaptation . . . our relation with the diaspora beyond our shores is one which can instruct our society in the values of diversity, tolerance, and fair-mindedness . . . If we expect that the mirror held up to

us by Irish communities abroad will show us a single familiar identity, or a pure strain of Irishness, we will be disappointed . . . we will miss the chance to have that dialogue with our own diversity which this reflection offers us.

Robinson's repeated invocation of the deterritorialised figure of the diaspora is credited with contributing to destabilizing sectarian politics of nationalism in both the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland (O' Toole 1997). The loosening of a territorialized identity that she foregrounds here is presented as a model of ingenuity, adaptability and openness to diversity that the Irish at home would do well to mimic. Robinson's successor in the presidential role, Mary McAleese, strengthened this commitment to the diaspora when she valorised the 'global Irish family' as part of the Irish nation (Gray 2004b). However, in a recent speech to the Emigrant Advice Network, President McAleese (2005) captured the continued salience of older aspects of the emigration debate to the present day:

Emigration resonates deeply with us all, touching as it does every family at some time or another. We understand very well the sadness of parting and the difficulties of adjusting both for those that left as well as those that remained. Indeed, this sadness and sense of loss is reflected in Padraic O Conaire's beautiful but poignant word for exile, *deoraíocht*, from the Irish word for tears. However, we also recognise that the experience of emigration represents much more than a litany of loss. It is also a long and proud story of opportunity, of courage and of bridging two worlds.

President McAleese's speech suggests that remnants of older portrayals of emigration resurface in more contemporary times. If tropes of 'exile' largely position emigrants as forever lost to the Irish nation, tropes of 'opportunity' and 'diaspora' restore the emigrant population as an integral part of the nation – and open up the possibility of eventual homecoming (Condon 2009; Gray 2006a, 2006b). The various strands of the discussion, then, can be seen as entangled and threaded through one

another, whereby older perspectives on the emigration phenomenon show a resilience that often re-emerges in more contemporary times.

Importantly, the Irish government has been reluctant to get involved at policy-level with regard to the welfare of Irish emigrants, even though migration has long been a matter of public discussion in the Republic of Ireland. With the obvious exception of the presence of Irish consulates and embassies abroad, Mark Boyle and Rob Kitchin (2008, 5) state, “the Irish state has traditionally not sought to manage the diaspora in an overly-determined way.” No explicit government policy initiatives exist in relation to the Irish diaspora. Nevertheless, some schemes designed to strengthen links with Irish nationals abroad have been implemented in recent years, suggesting a re-evaluation of the government’s traditionally remote approach to the diaspora.

For example, the 1995 Report of the Commission on the Family dedicated a full chapter to ‘Family Networks and the Irish Diaspora’. It noted that emigrants have strong connections with their families back home, and called for an examination of how kin networks might be strengthened and young people better prepared for migration. Following this, the Department of Foreign Affairs’s 1996 White Paper *Challenges and Opportunities Abroad* included a chapter entitled ‘The Irish Abroad’. It identifies the 70 million-strong population throughout the world who claim Irish ancestry as a “vast extended family [which] creates an immense reservoir of goodwill towards Ireland and is one of our most important assets as a nation” (1996, Subsection 12.1). The White Paper both embraces the diaspora as a resource, while also acknowledging that many ill-equipped and vulnerable people continue to emigrate. In addition, it committed the government to preventing involuntary emigration and supporting vulnerable Irish abroad. What is noteworthy about these more recent reports is that they encourage for the first time a more proactive approach towards the diaspora. Through the promotion and creation of schemes designed to foster links and networks between the homeland and the diaspora, the policy recommendations in these recent reports signaled a shift in the government’s approach to its citizens abroad.

More recently still, the Good Friday Agreement (1998) can be seen as a watershed regarding the government's policy towards its emigrants. The passing of the Good Friday Agreement into law is widely seen as a major steppingstone in bringing about a successful peace agreement in Northern Ireland. A further provision of the agreement, however, is that it acknowledges that the states of both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland officially include 'the Irish abroad' as part of the Irish nation. In relation to people born in the Republic of Ireland, official recognition of the Irish diaspora emerged with the amendment to Article 2 of the Constitution, which now states: "the Irish nation cherishes its special affinity with people of Irish ancestry living abroad who share its cultural identity and heritage" (Irish Constitution, Article 2 Paragraph 4). This new commitment to the diaspora was followed up in 2002 when the government established a *Task Force on Policy Regarding Emigrants*. The Task Force Report (2002, 14) states that "the new approach to meeting the needs of emigrants should be rooted in the recently introduced Constitutional commitment to the Irish Abroad. This includes acknowledging the Irish Abroad as part of the Irish Nation and recognizing their achievements." The diaspora are officially named 'the Irish Abroad', and formally identified as a constituency whose welfare and other needs should be responded to by government. Arguably, the passing of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum has further strengthened the government's commitment to and connection with the Irish diaspora (Harrington 2005; Lentin 2007). The Irish electorate overwhelmingly ratified the proposed amendment to Article 9 of the Constitution, which introduced a clause restricting automatic Irish citizenship and nationality to those of Irish descent (Gray 2006a). The Amendment altered automatic Irish citizenship and nationality entitlements from a regime of *jus soli* (right of soil) to one of *jus sanguinis* (right of blood). This means that people born on the Island of Ireland are not automatically entitled to Irish citizenship and nationality unless at least one of their parents is an Irish citizen. Conversely, persons born outside of the Island of Ireland who have at least one grandparent who is/was an Irish citizen are automatically entitled to Irish citizenship and nationality, even if they have never been resident in the country.

These recent government interventions into the life of the diaspora signal a shift from a position of general indifference regarding Irish emigrants towards a more proactive engagement with the role of the overseas population. In particular, strengthening links with the diaspora creates a set of expectations for those Irish emigrants who choose to return. Irish emigrants are represented in recent government initiatives as unconditionally belonging to their country of origin. This is important because if the role granted to emigrants in representations of the Irish diaspora is not recognized upon return, then this may create a mismatch between expectations and reality, leading to a dissonance between ideas of home in the pre- and post-return context. Recasting emigration as opportunity, exile or diasporic are three interwoven perspectives on the issue. Commentary relating to one perspective may be more vocal at various times than others. It is important to reiterate, however, that these competing views on emigration intermingle and entwine. While the dominant depiction may change, vestiges of different portrayals of emigration persist, and may therefore shape and frame participants experience of (re)settlement upon return. Following Condon (2009), each stance on emigration opens up a different set of possibilities for the reception of Irish return migrants. This is significant for analyzing participants' narratives of return in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

3.4 Outline of 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland

The global economic downturn of 2008 exposed the vulnerability of the Republic of Ireland's economy (Leahy 2009). This has changed dramatically the course of debates on the country's recent economic developments (Ross 2009). It is therefore unsurprising to find commentators making comparisons between today's Ireland and that of the 1980s, when a deep-rooted recession gripped the country (Coulter and Coleman 2003). Nevertheless, in the light of the recent economic contraction, it remains important to retrace the history of the economic alterations that took place throughout the country during the decades preceding the recent recession. It is worth remembering that the Republic of Ireland of the early twenty-first century was described as a very different place from that of two decades previously. This is

important because the idea of the Celtic Tiger informs and influences participants' re-settlement trajectories.

The economic boom of the late-1990s/early-2000s known as the Celtic Tiger was understood as having transformed Ireland (for better or worse) from one of the poorest developed European states, to one of the wealthiest countries in the European Union (Kirby 2002). Largely because of American multinational investment, there was a 350 per cent increase in economic output between the years 1995 and 2006, outpacing the per capita average in both the United States and the United Kingdom (O' Toole 2009). Personal disposable incomes doubled during the same period, and exports increased fivefold, while employment rose from 1.1 million in 1998 to 1.9 million in early-2008 (Foster 2008). Trade surpluses accumulated into billions during the boom, and migrants, both returning Irish-born and new arrivals, alighted on the country in record numbers (Fanning 2007).

Within this general overview of the Republic of Ireland's economic metamorphosis, however, commentators' analysis of the transformations during the Celtic Tiger years can be divided roughly into two opposing camps. On the one side were the optimists, usually emanating from government and the right-leaning press, who presented a positive view of the Celtic Tiger successes (Clinch et al. 2002). Citing the overall rise in prosperity, and its tendency to 'lift all boats' in the process, they also took pride in a concomitant resurrection of Irish cultural production, as events like Riverdance, the popularity of Irish bands like U2, and so on, gained international recognition (MacSharry and White 2001). On the other side were the pessimists, emanating largely from the left-leaning press, who were quick to point out the rise in relative poverty during the boom years (Ostwald-Harris 2009). The level of social inequality rose through the Celtic Tiger years, and the pessimists argued that the rising tide of prosperity only 'lifted all yachts' (Allen 2000). In addition, even if the pessimists conceded that the policies driving the economy were a success, they regarded the period as one of widespread social failure. They expressed a general consensus that public services (health, housing, education and infrastructure) were

neglected during the boom at the expense of short-term economic profit (Kirby 2002).

Nevertheless, at the time it would appear that the optimists won the debate. The ruling political party during the boom years, *Fianna Fáil*, was resoundingly re-elected under the mantra of their slogan, 'A lot done, more to do' (Leahy 2009). And if further support were needed, in November 2004 the newsmagazine the *Economist* ranked the Republic of Ireland's overall quality of life as the highest in the world (*Economist* 2004). From a combination of economic statistics and other measures such as life expectancy, divorce rates, public services, political liberties, educational and economic opportunities, Ireland emerged from the *Economist's* survey of 111 of the world's countries as the happiest. This halcyon image of a successful small island state was very different from the dismal days of the 1980s when the country was in the midst of a major economic recession, and the spectre of emigration loomed over Irish families, especially their younger members. Knowing that this is the general context to which participants in this study returned is important to any evaluation of their experiences of returning home.

3.5 Public statements on Irish return migration

Another important dimension of the context of return was the tendency for returnees to feature in public commentary in a number of often-contradictory and competing ways. In this section I examine public statements on return migration to the Republic of Ireland. I focus on two main arenas where returnees have featured as a focus of discussion: the mainstream Irish media, and the Irish government. This is important to outline because it highlights the complexity and, sometimes, the ambiguity of the reception awaiting return migrants. Analysing these public statements raises awkward questions about hospitality, especially about the ways in which Irish return migrants are welcomed back to their country of origin. In this section I show that, at one extreme, returnees receive a 'heroes' homecoming'. At the other extreme, however, I show that returnees are represented as guests overstaying their welcome. These contradictory public statements on return migrants are significant because, as I

argue throughout this section, they inflect participants' articulations of home upon return. Returnees' ideas of home are not fully bound-up within media and government portrayals of return migrants. That said, neither can their (re)settlement experiences be understood as entirely disconnected from pervasive media and government viewpoints on returnees. In Section 3.5.1 I examine media commentary on Irish return migration, before looking at government discussions on return migrants in Section 3.5.2.

3.5.1 Return migrants in the Irish media

The return migration of Irish-born migrants has featured as a newsworthy topic in a range of Irish-based publications. A review of print coverage of the issue reflects the complexity surrounding return. Influential Irish media commentator and public intellectual David McWilliams sparked debate on return migration with the publication of his bestselling 2005 *The Pope's children: Ireland's new elite*. While McWilliams' (2005) account is primarily concerned with an analysis of Irish attitudinal shifts since the economic boom of the late-1990s, he dedicates the closing chapter of the book to some of the country's newest arrivals, its return migrants. Identifying the returning diaspora as influential in catalysing Ireland's recent economic and cultural revival, McWilliams argues that the figure of the returnee offers an answer to one of the keenest imbroglios of contemporary Ireland: namely, the tension between what he calls 'Hibernians' on the one hand, and 'Cosmopolitans' on the other. Hibernians represent the cultural conservatism and isolationism of old-fashioned, shillelagh-yielding irredentist nationalists – the key features of old-school Irishness. Cosmopolitans represent the openness to outside influences, often identifying primarily as European (or American) and only subsidiarily as Irish. McWilliams contends that the competing forces of Hibernianism and Cosmopolitanism are reconciled in the figure of the returned migrant, an amalgamated 'HiCo'. As a hybrid between the two, the returning HiCo is "equally at home in Beacon Hill and Hill 16," and has had a "huge influence on the economy but not yet on the politics of the country. We should not underestimate the role that their

contacts, networks and personal friendships, particularly in the US, have played in driving foreign investment here” (McWilliams 2005, 242).

Of course, the characterization of returnees as an aristocratic cohort with endless skills, imagination, initiative and contacts to drive Ireland’s economic boom and reconcile the cultural tensions between Hibernianism and Cosmopolitanism is not the entire story. Other media portrayals of return migration centred on ordinary Irish people who uprooted their lives away from traditional working-class Irish neighbourhoods such as Yonkers and Queens in New York and Dorchester in Boston and returned to their country of origin. The Irish print media presented a host of stories from less well-heeled returnees, who offered a different view of return. For example, the *Irish Times* ran a series of features with recently returned migrants when the soft landing that was expected by many was not forthcoming upon return. Rather than a narrative of triumphs focused on high-flying returnees, these stories centred on the low-key players involved in the complex process of return. ‘You can’t go home again?’ (*Irish Times* 1996), ‘Strangers in their own land’ (*Irish Times* 1999) and ‘Alien Nation’ (*Irish Times* 2001) all detail the awkward positioning of returnees, as they show how resettling back home is often more difficult than the trials of emigration. The *Irish Independent* (2000), in a piece aptly titled ‘A sort of homecoming’, profiled one of the country’s more ‘visible’ and publicly audible returnees, Donal O’ Leary. Having arrived back to his native Co Kerry after fourteen years spent in Boston, O’ Leary became disillusioned with what he saw as the inordinate difficulties of finding his feet upon return. He soon discovered that he was not alone in his disorientation, as many other returnees he spoke with shared his sentiments regarding the discontents of return. In response, O’ Leary established the Return Emigrants Network, where returnees could informally share tales of travelling and swap stories of homecoming, with the broader aim of offering advice and support to those settling back. Claiming that his motivation for forming the group came from his own experience of alienation upon return, O’ Leary states, “There is a double loss: what one has left behind in another country and what one has not found here” (*Irish Independent* 2000). Martina Devlin (2007, 24), a columnist writing in the *Irish Independent* in June 2007, laments what she understands to be the local Irish

population's "Jekyll and Hyde attitude towards returned emigrants: we want them - and we don't." Devlin (2007, 24) recalls how, once back, she quickly learned to keep her frames of reference strictly parochial, because at the first mention of an alternative world beyond the Republic of Ireland, "people's eyes glazed over or turned downright hostile" (Devlin 2007). She elaborates on what she understands to be a

resistance to returned emigrants sharing their expertise . . . People who haven't worked away can feel threatened by those with a broader perspective. . . . We pay lip service to the notion of opening our arms to our emigrants, but shrug our shoulders about problems in store for anyone taking us up on our half-hearted offer (Devlin 2007, 24).

This 'half-hearted' response to returnees is perfectly captured in a 'Letter to the editor' published in the *Evening Herald* in September 2007. An irate letter-writing citizen named Cait Ní Romhain (2007, 22) responds to a news story about the difficulties faced by return migrants by casting aspersions on their motives for coming back. Ní Romhain articulates a common public sentiment when she states,

It is the people who stayed behind who fixed what was wrong with this country – without, I might add, any help from the runaway generation, who abandoned Ireland like rats from a sinking ship. . . . So things have changed now and life has moved on without them. So what? I suppose they expected to come back to a Third World nation, so they could act the homecoming heroes with all their money and fancy foreign experiences.

Ignoring the billions of pounds in remittances that the 'runaway generation' sent to the country over the decades (Mac Laughlin 1994), the downright indifference, and even hostility, towards return migrants' life histories means that they can sometimes encounter a battery of barriers to belonging upon return.

In sum, these various remarks on return migration circulating in the media domain send out mixed messages regarding returnees. The celebratory side of the account that welcomes home returnees jostles in the public imagination with less flattering versions of the returnee. Analysis of these contradictory media statements on returnees is important because it exposes the complexity of the situation that participants in the current thesis found themselves returning to.

3.5.2 Return migrants in Irish government statements

At times, the issue of return migration has also captured the attention of Irish public officials. In May 2007, President Mary McAleese delivered speeches in Latvia and Lithuania in which she suggested that the economies of the new EU A8 countries' could learn from Ireland's lessons of attracting its emigrants' home. President McAleese (Quoted in Bowden 2007) suggests that Ireland could serve as a model for small-to-medium sized states to follow: "As your economy expands, many Lithuanians currently living in Ireland will surely feel the pull of home. When they do return, they will bring with them valued skills and experience to help develop your own country as it seeks to reap the full advantages of EU membership."

In her tour of Eastern Europe, President McAleese was referring to the success of the government-funded recruitment drive, the Jobs Ireland Campaign. In its aim to help fill the 40,000-odd job vacancies that arose in Ireland as a result of the Celtic Tiger economic boom in the 1990s, the government identified what it saw as an under-used constituency: the Irish diaspora. The *Economist* (2000) noted that as late as 1993 the Irish state's National Training and Employment Agency (FÁS), was sending delegates to major European cities in an effort to find jobs for unemployed Irish people back home. Seven years later, however, FÁS was being sent abroad again, but this time the aim was to bring back certain members of the diaspora to fill jobs in the domestic labor market (*Economist* 2000). The government pumped IR£4 million funding into the high-profile Jobs Ireland Campaign for the period 2000-2002 – over twice the amount the government spent in the same period supporting DION, an organization supporting vulnerable and homeless Irish communities throughout

Britain (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001). The size of this figure suggests the importance that the government placed on attracting back what it seems to have imagined as a pool of home-grown talent that was urgently required to fill gaps in Ireland's fledgling knowledge-economy.

Advertisements requesting Irish emigrants to return and work in Ireland were repeatedly placed in several Irish-interest newspapers abroad (Hayward and Howard 2007). The recruitment drive was touted as a "worldwide campaign to attract emigrants home" (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 2). Based on the assumption that there existed a "strategic reserve of Irish professionals abroad" (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 4), the Jobs Ireland Campaign ran bold-typed emotive headlines aimed at luring this particular constituency to return home. The following newspaper captions reveal some of the rhetorical tactics deployed to persuade emigrants homewards: "YOUNG, GIFTED AND GONE!", "YOUR COUNTRY NEEDS YOU!", "TIME TO GO HOME!", "WILD GEESE, COME HOME!" (Quoted in *Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 17-19). In a self-aggrandizing gesture, the *Jobs Ireland Magazine* (2001, 7) stated, "Ireland, Europe's fastest growing economy, is looking for bright energetic people like you to fill positions in a wide range of areas."

Having identified and targeted its flagship constituency, the Jobs Ireland Campaign then set about 'selling' the country in a way that it assumed would be favoured by returning migrants. Despite the well-documented dynamism of the Celtic Tiger, Ireland is simultaneously presented in the promotional literature as an indelible place, the reservoir of a mystical culture and inimitable way of life, with its romantic, undulating landscapes. In other words, echoing many of the characteristics found in McWilliams' portrait of the HiCo, Ireland is represented as a harmonious fusion between the newfangled Celtic Tiger and the Emerald Isle of old; and the promotional literature is duly speckled with pull-quotes of returnees' testimonies on the benefits of coming back. This spin of the hybrid-Ireland awaiting prospective returnees is evident in the following quotations from those who have already made the homecoming: "There is serious earning potential and a quality of life that has made Ireland famous the world over," (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 8); "I like this

job very much, it is perfect. Ireland is so beautiful,” (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 22); “I love the job. If someone offered me a job with a higher salary, I wouldn’t leave here,” (*Jobs Ireland Magazine* 2001, 24). Following this recruitment drive, Minister of State for Labour Tony Killeen (*Speech by Minister of States for Labour Affairs* 2006) stated at the launch of the FÁS Jobs Ireland Campaign in New York City in October 2006, “Ireland is no longer barren of opportunity. On the contrary, there are opportunities in abundance available to those who are prepared to grasp them.”

So government discussion of return migration as expressed in presidential and ministerial speeches discussed above occasionally chimes with some of the more sanguine press accounts of successful returnees buoying the vibrant Celtic Tiger economy. An examination of policy reports that discuss return migration, however, shows that re-integration of returnees is not so seamless in all instances. The Irish Presidency Conference in April 2004, following the findings of the Task Force Report (2002), states that one of its key recommendations to government is to “facilitate the return to Ireland and reintegration into Irish society of emigrants who wish to do so” (Reconciling Mobility and Social Inclusion 2004, 109). Despite this recommendation, this has not as yet resulted in the implementation of any actual policies with regards to returnees. No specific policies directly address returnees, nor is there any provision of bespoke statutory services explicitly targeting return migrants. Nevertheless, the Task Force Report (2002) found that, under the aegis of the Department of Social and Family Affairs, funding was provided for the first time in 2001 to various Catholic church-related and voluntary sector organisations that assisted intending or returned Irish migrants. The Crosscare Migrant Project, under the auspices of Crosscare (the Social Care Agency of the Archdiocese of Dublin), receives government funding to publish an annually-updated pamphlet, entitled *Returning to Ireland*. This pamphlet provides basic information for intending and returned migrants on issues that range from accommodation, health care, social welfare benefits and entitlements, education, tax, banking and finance, voting and citizenship entitlements, driving licenses and employment opportunities (Walter et al. 2002). The Safe Home Programme, established in 2000 and partially funded by the

Department of Family and Social Affairs, was set up to help vulnerable, elderly Irish migrants relocate to Ireland by providing social housing and support networks for returnees. It must be mentioned, however, that this programme is chronically underfunded, and numerous requests for assistance by intending returnees have gone unmet (Walter et al. 2002). In addition, as a result of lobbying government by various returnee groups, the Irish government has put in place regulations for the recognition of certain qualifications obtained abroad, including some university and professional degrees, as well as foreign driving licences (Walter et al. 2002). What is clear from a précis of the various government-led initiatives is that the government places the onus on the voluntary sector for identifying, engaging and tailoring services to meet return migrants' needs. In considering the acute settlement difficulties faced by some returnees, The Task Force Report on Policy Regarding Emigrants (Task Force Report 2002, 56) concludes that the most significant shortcoming of statutory services is in addressing the "potential isolation and loneliness that may result from returning, particularly in the initial stages."

The government's arms-wide-open approach to recruiting returnees into the Irish labor market contends with government neglect of returnee-specific concerns at social policy level. Analysis of these contradictory government postures towards returnees is important because it reveals the complexities surrounding homecoming. Urgent government entreaties directed at the Irish diaspora to return and fill jobs in a buoyant economy suggests a hospitable reception awaiting return migrants. At the same time, the lack of a policy response to vulnerable and isolated returnees displays a certain indifference towards the issue of return migration on the government's behalf. These divergent government stances towards return migrants provides a broad contextual setting that serves as a backdrop to participants' narratives of home, to be explored in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

3.6 Conclusion

With a focus on return migration, this chapter examined the recent history of Irish migration patterns through a breakdown of Census reports and analysis of media,

government and policy depictions of the phenomenon. I framed the topic of Irish migration in a broad historical context by, first, presenting estimates of the numbers involved in Ireland's migration movements and, second, by examining the media, government and policy responses that these population flows. The chapter had a dual aim. First, to present the broad contextual setting that provides the backdrop to participants' narratives of home in Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, and, second, to outline the often-paradoxical and contradictory representation of returnees in media, government and policy perspectives on return migration. Delineating the historical and discursive background to recent Irish return migration is important because, as will be demonstrated in the following empirical chapters, these viewpoints influence participants' (re)settlement experiences upon homecoming.

The examination of the Census reports showed that return migration has been one of the most prominent features of the Republic of Ireland's recent migration patterns, with returnees composing approximately 11.3 per cent of the country's population. The Republic of Ireland's long history as an emigrant-sending society has sparked divergent perspectives on the subject of emigration from media, government and policy sources. The three dominant viewpoints on emigration – as opportunity, exile, or diasporic – are not mutually exclusive, but are braided together to form an important part of the general historical context to which participants in this thesis returned to. In addition, the recent in-flow of Irish-born migrants to the country elicited numerous responses from media and government, and their commentary adds a further layer of complexity to this contextual background of return. I outlined how media and government portrayals of returnees display contradictory stances towards return migrants. On the one hand, returnees are framed in some media and government statements as unconditionally belonging to their country of origin. On the other, returnees are cast in other media and government representations as unwelcome and unwanted. These various media and government representations of emigration and return are threaded through one another and that differing depictions of leaving and coming back compete with one another for public attention. I suggested throughout the chapter that no matter how firmly return migrants may have their heads buried in the sand, their narratives of homecoming cannot be

articulated without reference to the ways in which they are represented in public statements on migration.

Before offering an analysis of participants' narratives of homecoming, however, it is important to describe the methodology and methods that inform the conduct of this research. In the following chapter I discuss the qualitative approach that I adopted in my research, as well as justify the methods of data collection and analysis of the empirical material.

Chapter 4 Methodology and methods

4.1 Introduction

As outlined in the previous chapters, my aim in this thesis is to understand the meanings that Irish-born return migrants from the United States attach to the notion of home. In this chapter I explain how I came to choose and undertake my particular research topic, and offer a justification for the study's qualitative approach. In addition, I discuss the methodological strengths and weaknesses of the study. The aim of this chapter is twofold. First, to show how the techniques and tactics employed in the research help me to successfully address the research questions; and second, to offer a robust defence of the approach I have taken in the research.

The first section of the chapter addresses the study's epistemological and ontological stance commitments. I explain how the interpretivist tradition in social science helps address the study's research questions. In the second main section, I explain the reasons for choosing the study's particular field-site, as well as the logic behind selecting the specific cohort of returnees that my research focuses on. This is followed by a discussion of the process of data collection and analysis, involving semi-structured interviewing and analysis of various documentary sources. The third section addresses the process of representing and writing-up the research findings in the wake of the so-called 'crisis of representation'. Finally, I consider the methodological limitations of the study, and discuss additional methods and techniques that could have been employed productively given additional time and resources.

4.2 Methodological foundations of the research

In this section I outline the philosophical framework adopted in my research. I suggest that an interpretivist methodology to social research is the most appropriate approach for addressing my particular research project. Mary Jo Hatch and Dvora Yanow (2008) claim that the research paradigms underpinning various disciplinary traditions often go unexamined. This means that the philosophical standpoints that determine the definition of concepts, the framing of research questions, the selection

of methods for examining phenomena, as well as what counts as appropriate data for analysis, often remain unquestioned. Discussions of research results conducted from differing philosophical approaches that have not been made explicit may result in the misrecognition by scholars of substantive and philosophical questions – the conflation of method with methodology (Silvey and Lawson 1999). It is therefore important to address explicitly the methodological frame of this study – its ‘way of seeing’ (Berger 1972) – in order to avoid confusion over the subsequent analysis of the empirical material.

Methodology here refers to the rationale and philosophical assumptions of the study (Flick et al. 2004; Hughes and Sharrock 1997; Johnston 1986). It involves addressing the applied epistemological and ontological issues relating to the examination of participants’ ideas of home in the post-return context. In order to achieve this, I adopt an interpretivist framework throughout the research. The notion of ‘understanding’ is a central concept in this thesis. The Weberian *Verstehen* approach in social science stems from the German intellectual tradition of hermeneutics, phenomenology, symbolic interactionism and various critiques of positivism in the human sciences (Hay 2000; Martin 2000; Rabinow and Sullivan 1987; Schwandt 1994). As Schwandt (1994, 118) puts it,

Proponents of these persuasions share the goal of understanding the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it. This goal is variously spoken of as an abiding concern for the life world, for the emic point of view, for understanding meaning, for grasping the actor’s definition of a situation, for *Verstehen*. The world of lived reality and situation-specific meanings that constitute the general object of investigation is thought to be constructed by social actors.

Adopting an interpretivist epistemology entails an understanding of the social world of people and their institutions as distinct from the objects of the natural world (Rabinow and Sullivan 1987; Schutz 1973). It involves a commitment to grasping the subjective meaning of social action. Max Weber (quoted in Wolcott 2001, 70) states that “man [*sic*] is an animal suspended in webs of significance he [*sic*] himself has

spun.” If this is the case, then the job of the social researcher becomes one of disentangling the meaning-laden skein surrounding people’s lives. One of the founding figures of the interpretivist tradition, Alfred Schutz (1973, 27), expressed the difference between the interpretivist approach to the human sciences and the natural sciences succinctly:

The world of nature as explored by the natural scientist does not ‘mean’ anything to molecules, atoms and electrons. But the observational field of the social scientist – social reality – has a specific meaning and relevance structure for the beings living, acting and thinking within it.

Instead of just seeking *explanations* of human behavior (the distinctive characteristic of the positivism orthodoxy), interpretivism seeks an *understanding* of human actions. It is an empathetic science that aims at eliciting in thick description the meanings that actors attach to their actions and context (Ezzy 2002; Racher and Robinson 2003; Schwandt 1994). So, for example, while the migration behavior of participants interviewed for this study shows a large degree of convergence – all departed from and returned to the Republic of Ireland during the same periods – it does not necessarily follow that they attach homogenous meanings to comparable migration histories. In fact, as the following empirical chapters will show, the significance that participants attribute to actions that seem the same on a strictly behavioural basis display a host of divergences, contradictions and heterogeneities.

An interpretivist ontology takes the position that social phenomena, categories and the meaning attached to social actions are continually being accomplished, negotiated, interpreted, and revised by social actors (Berger and Luckmann 1967). Interpretivists claim that organizations and cultures – such as politics, law, the arts, as well as social scientific endeavors like this one – are not pre-given entities but are constructed out of the ongoing interactions, demurrals and eventual (provisional) consensus of agents in the social realm (Kuhn 1970; Latour and Wollgar 1979; Williamson 2006). This is not to claim that there is no such thing as an objective reality, however. Institutions and cultures antecede social actors in many instances

(Searle 1995). They act as enabling and/or constraining influences and points of reference on the participation of social actors (Bassett 1999; Giddens 1991). While they pre-exist the arrival of social actors, institutions and cultures are not ossified to the point whereby they asphyxiate any input from social participants. This study adopts the position that objective structures influence the action and behaviour of social agents, without thereby precluding the possibility of innovation, intervention and subjective creativity of social agents (Bassett 1999). For example, as I will show in Chapter 8, the meaning of home for participants in my research is not entirely captured through their subjective evaluation of the concept, but also involves an awareness of the ways in which others see them as being ‘at home’ or not. This does not mean that participants unhesitatingly accept the ascribed positioning to home that others expect them to assume, however. In some instances, participants in the post-return context upset ascribed meanings of home, and begin to challenge normative boundaries of belonging.

Therefore, adopting an interpretivist approach to the study of Irish-born return migrants from the United States is particularly useful for considering the meanings migrants attach to the notion of home. As discussed in Chapter 2, while home is an increasingly opaque concept in a world characterized by mobility, this does not thereby detract from its importance as a highly symbolic and significant imaginary in people’s lives. However, part of the opacity of home is that it remains largely a tacitly acknowledged notion. Employing an interpretivist stance is particularly suitable for answering this thesis’s research questions, as home’s oft-occluded meanings can be uncovered by endeavouring to elicit from participants their subjective understandings of this concept.

4.2.1 Methodological issues in researching migrants’ homes

Many migration scholars have focused on spatial modelling and demographic patterns of human settlement (Halfacree and Boyle 1998). This led to the predominance of a quantitative approach to migration research, which frequently privileged the economic motivations underlying the migration decision-making

process (Halfacree 2004). The empirical regularities said to govern the spatial ordering of population movements that quantitative approaches wish to reveal do not tell the whole story of migration, however. Anthony Fielding (1992, 16) summed-up the shortcomings of dominant quantitative approaches to migration research as follows:

There is something strange about the way we study migration. We know . . . that moving from one place to another is nearly always a major event. . . . The feelings associated with migration are usually complicated, the decision to migrate is typically difficult to make, and the outcome usually involves mixed emotions Migration tends to expose one's personality, it expresses one's loyalties and reveals one's values and attachments (often previously hidden). It is a statement of an individual's world-view, and is, therefore, an extremely cultural event And yet, when we study migration scientifically, we seem to forget all this. . . . The migrant is either seen as a "rational economic man" [*sic*] choosing individual advancement by responding to the economic signals of the job and housing markets, or as a virtual prisoner of his or her class position, and thereby subject to powerful structural economic forces set in motion by the logic of capitalist accumulation.

In an effort to address some of these methodological problems highlighted by Fielding, a number of migration researchers called for a re-integration of migration studies into recent developments in social theory (Brettell and Hollifield 2000; Halfacree and Boyle 1993, 1998; Findlay and Li 1999; Graham 1999; Skeldon 1995; White and Jackson 1995). They advocated a re-conceptualization of migration that recognizes its situatedness within everyday life, recognizing the role of human agency, biographical details, and the place of social structures and culture in the wider process of migration decision-making (Silvey 2004; Vandsemb 1995). Allan M Findlay and Elspeth Graham (1991, 160) called on migration geographers to include in their portfolio of methods "humanistic methodologies in exploring the experience of migration." This has led to a recent profusion of migration research

adopting intensive, qualitative approaches and methodologies. These strategies include biographical (Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Findlay and Li 1997; Ní Laoire 2000, 2007), structuralist (Halfacree 1995; Silvey and Lawson 1999), feminist (Lavie and Swedenburg 1996) and realist (Iosifides 2003) approaches to migration research, as well as the use of mixed-method approaches (Pooley and Turnbull 1998).

Connecting the ‘cultural turn’ in human geography with migration studies led researchers to the recognition that “migration is also a social and cultural phenomenon that is bound up with issues of place, identity and subjectivity” (Ní Laoire, 2000, 232).

Examining the subjective meanings that people attach to their migration journeys offers fresh insights into the processes of uprooting and resettlement that every migration entails. My own work fits with qualitative approaches to migration research insofar as I attempt to understand the meanings attached to the complex notion of home for a group of returned migrants. As discussed in Chapter 2, migration arguably accentuates the complexity of home. Movement from one place to another draws attention to the question of what home means to people. As I argued in Chapter 2, this is especially the case in the context of return migration, as people come back to the old/new place of their country of origin. It is important to investigate the ways in which return migrants experience and understand their own changing home environments. Adopting an interpretivist paradigm is ideally suited to grasping such shifting interpretations, as it helps to elicit, in thick description, the meanings that Irish-born return migrants from the United States attach to their ideas of home. In order to operationalise this interpretivist methodology, I used ethnographic techniques of in-depth semi-structured interviewing as the main data collection method.

4.3 Research design

In this section I outline how my research evolved over distinct phases, from its initial autobiographical and academic origins, to its gradual winnowing of research questions, through to its more focused empirical data collection period. I demonstrate how the research design maintained the necessary flexibility required of qualitative

approaches, as well as show how I conceived a plan for ensuring the feasibility of the proposed research. Furthermore, I discuss and justify the selection of specific field-sites, research participants and other sources of information.

4.3.1 Study sites and recruitment of respondents

My decision to conduct research on return migration of Irish-born migrants from the United States stemmed from a variety of influences. First, from a personal perspective, as I was growing up in late-1980s/early-1990s, emigration was a backdrop of sorts to my life. The large landlocked county of Tipperary, where I attended primary and secondary school, had one of the highest rates of emigration from the Republic of Ireland during the period with which my research is concerned (Mac Laughlin 1997). While my immediate family remained at home, members of my extended family, as well as neighbours and the older siblings of my school friends, relocated to the United States. I would see each Christmas aunts and uncles home for the holidays, and when the time arrived for them to go back to their lives abroad, we would drive them to Shannon Airport, on the west coast of Ireland, to board flights set for Logan or John F Kennedy Airport, on the east coast of America. In my naivety, I remember wondering at the time why these destinations had Irish surnames. By the time I entered university in the autumn of 2000, most of my aunts and uncles who had left for the United States in the 1980s/1990s had returned to live once again in the areas where they themselves had grown-up.

This autobiographical aperçu has informed my choice of research project and field-site. As an inexperienced traveller keen to see other places, I was fascinated by the lives that my extended family had lived abroad, but equally interested to understand why they had come back to the Republic of Ireland at the particular juncture they chose.

In May 2007, I ‘returned home’ and conducted three pilot interviews with participants identified through personal contacts. These pilot interviews sharpened the focus of the research topic. For example, as a result of the pilot study, a shift in

focus away from a concern with transnational activities of Irish return migrants to a more concentrated emphasis on the concept of home in the post-return context occurred. In addition, I undertook preliminary analysis of state documents relating to return migration, conducted online research examining special reports in both American and Irish newspapers on return migration, as well as perused popular cultural artefacts such as movies, novels and plays relating to Irish returnees. This triangulation between ongoing literature reviews, pilot interviews and preliminary textual analysis helped to delineate the interview guide, as well as assisted in identifying suitable participants for inclusion in the research.

The West of Ireland was chosen as a second location to examine the understandings of home among returned migrants. Research conducted by Jones (2003) suggests that, even in the absence of ostensible employment opportunities, in some instances returnees favour a return to the areas of their birth, rather than returning to a new area of settlement in their country of origin containing greater job prospects. Jones' research found that the counties that experienced the highest rates of emigration in the 1980s were also the counties that experienced some of the highest rates of return migration in the late-1990s/early-2000s. Furthermore, Ní Laoire's (2007) research on Irish return migration shows that a strong theme of counter-urbanization emerges from returnees' narratives of homecoming, and that the notion of a return to a rural idyll of uncomplicated belonging often informs the decision to relocate to non-urbanized areas. High levels of emigration from the counties in the West of Ireland have been well documented (Mac Laughlin 1994). Therefore, following Jones' (2003) and Ní Laoire's (2007) findings, I estimated that a further pool of return migrants would be located in and around Galway City and its hinterlands. In addition, as a graduate of the National University of Ireland, Galway, I had a number of continuing academic links with the university. Before departure for the field-site, the ethical implications of the research were thoroughly considered. In May 2007 the Institute of Geography's Research Ethics Committee gave the project ethical clearance. An interview consent form to be read and signed in advance by participants was drawn up and sanctioned by the Ethics Committee (see Appendix I).

The project included only those migrants from the United States who were Irish-born, had immigrated to the United States in the late-1980s/early-1990s, and had returned after 1996 to live in the Republic of Ireland. As discussed in Chapter 2, the United States was a popular destination for Irish emigrants in the late-1980s/early-1990s, and the age-profile of this emigrant cohort to the United States was predominantly young. Therefore, taking into consideration the demographic trends emerging from recent Census reports, I recruited only those returnees who fell between the ages 35-45. A further rationale for focusing on this age cohort emerges from scholarly research on life-course transitions and migration decision-making. The connection between the timing of major life events and migration has been well documented (Fischer and Malmberg 2001; Halfacree and Boyle 1993; Ní Laoire 2000, 2007). As my research aims to examine the understandings of home among return migrants, it is assumed that the decision to return and resettle in the country of origin after a significant period of time abroad constitutes a major life-course transition – and is therefore intimately connected to the construction and negotiation of a sense of home. Furthermore, I attempted to include a broad cross-section of those Irish-born migrants returning from the United States, and was duly mindful of debates on the characteristics of Irish emigrants in the late-1980s/early-1990s (as discussed in Chapter 3), as well as emerging information on the social composition of recent return migrants (Barrett and O’ Connell 2001; Jones 2003; Punch and Finnernan 1999). With these considerations in mind, I aimed to recruit both graduate and non-graduate returnees, as well as those who had been in the United States without visa documentation, to partake in my research project. In addition to this broad occupational/class spectrum of prospective participants, I aspired to recruit equal numbers of female and male informants.

After identifying the main target group of potential informants, as well as deciding on the main recruitment locations, initial interviews were conducted with participants who had been identified in advance through personal contacts, family friends and acquaintances. Further participants were identified through a snowball sampling technique whereby participants would refer me to another willing and appropriate

participant. Snowball sampling proved a useful method for identifying participants initially, as the research population is relatively difficult to access. However, the inherent bias and over-reliance on limited networks in snowball sampling is well-documented (Flick 2006). Therefore, the research required a second sampling strategy in the form of purposive sampling. Of the 37 participants interviewed for this project, 15 resulted from snowball sampling, while 22 occurred through the purposive strategy.

While in the field, I contacted emigrant/return emigrant support organizations, outlining my research questions and aims, and asked for counsel on how to access the returnee population. In addition, I wrote a plain-language letter of introduction describing myself and outlining the purpose and aims of the research to be sent to participants in advance of interviews. In a drive to recruit participants from the two field locations, I sent a 'Letter to the Editor' into several regional and national newspapers describing the research and asking for prospective informants to get in touch with me if they were interested in participating in the project (see Appendix II). The Letter to the Editor was published in a number of regional newspapers and in one of the main national daily papers, the *Irish Times*. Finally, I posted a description of the research project on an internet discussion forum relating to Irish migration, and asked suitable candidates to contact me if they were interested in participating.

At the outset of the research, I assumed that participant observation would be a valuable method of data collection. However, Ní Laoire's (2007, 2008a, 2008b) argument that return migrants, while constituting a significant segment of the population, largely remain invisible upon homecoming proved true. The many similarities (in terms of appearance and accent) between returnees and non-migratory Irish people mean that the target community is relatively difficult to access. Return migrants possess no visible markers distinguishing them from the rest of the Irish-born population. Therefore, participant observation proved an inappropriate method for gathering data. As a consequence, the original plan was modified to focus on intensive, in-depth interviewing as the main method for generating data, while also

allowing for a re-orientation of certain research questions to probe the potential implications of this general ‘invisibility’ of the research population.

4.3.2 Semi-structured interviews

Two primary field sites were selected: the Dublin conurbation and the West Coast of Ireland, based out of Galway City. There were both intellectual and practical reasons for choosing these two contrasting geographical areas. According to the 2006 Census, the Greater Dublin Area has a population of 1,661,185, or approximately 40 per cent of the population of the Republic of Ireland (Central Statistics Office 2006). The main reason for this population density is the uneven concentration of economic opportunities in and around the country’s capital. The Greater Dublin Area therefore became a logical location to conduct fieldwork as I estimated that a large pool of Ireland’s returned migrants from the United States would be located in and around the capital for employment purposes.

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method of data collection in this research. The varieties of interview formats in social science research are legion (Flick 2006). I decided, for a number of reasons, that semi-structured interviews offered the most suitable approach to understanding the meanings of home among Irish returned migrants. Semi-structured interviews give the interviewer flexibility and room for creativity in the course of conversation with the interviewee (Fontana and Frey 2000; Kvale 1996). Interviewees can raise complementary issues that may have been neglected by the researcher, and their responses are not shoehorned into predetermined interview structures and questions (Miller 2000). Semi-structured interviews are ‘focused’ insofar as each interview aims to elicit responses to particular questions, but the exact phrasing and order of questioning is adapted to fit the unique dynamic and rapport between interviewer and interviewee that each interview situation creates (Denzin 1997). It is this flexibility and spontaneity offered by the semi-structured interviewing method that fits most closely with my study’s methodological concern for issues related to understanding, meaning and interpretation.

The interview guide was structured into three sections (see Appendix III). The questions in Section 1 aimed at establishing a rapport and a level of trust and openness with respondents. Questions focused on simple background information on informants, such as age, employment history, length of time back in the country, and individual and family migration histories. Section 2 focused on informants' experiences of living in the United States, while progressing to more in-depth questions of migration decision-making, ethnicity and feelings of attachment to the United States. Section 3 of the interview guide aimed to elicit the 'thickest description' from respondents in relation to the study's research questions. It focused on respondents' return migration decision-making, their ideas, feelings and experiences of home upon return, and their future migration plans. These questions were delayed until the latter part of the interview because they required informants to share more personal and intimate details of their migratory histories. I hoped that by the time the interview had progressed to this final section, respondents would have already raised the issue of home themselves. In the majority of instances, this proved to be the case, and the intensive, in-depth semi-structured interview showed itself to be a highly useful method of gathering data on questions related to migration and home.

In total I conducted 32 semi-structured interviews with 37 people (See Appendix IV for full list of research participants' main characteristics). In five instances interviews were conducted with couples, where both partners met the above-mentioned criteria for inclusion in the study. This generated an interesting group dynamic that had not been anticipated in advance. Eighteen interviews were conducted in the Greater Dublin Area, while fourteen interviews were held in the West of Ireland region. Interviews lasted anywhere from one to three hours in duration. On all bar one occasion, respondents showed no hesitation to having the interview recorded. Interviewees were given the consent form to read and sign before the interview proper commenced.

The issue of where to conduct interviews was addressed individually with each participant. I aimed to strike a balance between convenience for the participants and the identification of a suitable location, namely a quiet atmosphere where the interview would not be disrupted by intrusions or noise affecting the quality of the sound recording. On several occasions I was directly invited to interviewees' homes. This often resulted in participants showing me personal memorabilia from their lives in the United States, such as photographs of their former homes, or newspaper clippings of stories relating to Irish migration. It was decided that cafés were not a suitable location to conduct interviews. After listening to the sound recording of one interview conducted in a café, it became apparent that the clattering of cutlery and hissing of the barista coffee machine rendered the recording largely incomprehensible. Instead, the remainder of the interviews were conducted in a quiet corner of a public house or the lobby of a hotel where decibel-levels would not interfere excessively with the quality of the recording.

Interviews were conducted during one fieldwork period between September 2007 and February 2008. Recruitment of participants was a mercurial experience. The interviewing process began at what felt like a very slow pace. I found it difficult to get in touch with suitable candidates in September. There are a number of reasons for this. First, my inexperience in the field, as I was 'finding my feet', may have resulted in missed opportunities for collecting data. Second, September is traditionally a hectic month in the Republic of Ireland when children are returning to school, and mature students in higher education are returning to university. Therefore, those suitable candidates with children of school-age, and those returning to university may have had limited disposable time to volunteer. The snowball sampling method of recruitment proved less successful than initially expected. Successfully interviewed participants often seemed to have the best of intentions and enthusiasm about referring me to another suitable informant. However, they frequently failed to follow through on this. If interviewed informants failed to put me in touch with their contact after I had reminded them once, I let the lead lie for fear of appearing overly intrusive or insistent. Participant recruitment picked up during October and November, as my Letter to the Editor was published in various regional newspapers,

and this resulted in a number of suitable candidates getting in touch with me via email, telephone or SMS. The greatest boon of contacts came after the Letter to the Editor was published by one of the country's largest circulating daily nationals, the *Irish Times*.² Therefore, those who voluntarily contacted me via email or telephone to be interviewed had a good idea in advance of what to expect from the interview.³ Interviews rarely took place on the initial time agreed. Unforeseen events frequently resulted in willing participants postponing the interview until a later date. The majority of interviews with those who had responded to my Letter to the Editor were unexpectedly conducted around the Christmas period. It turned out the main reason for this was that participants had more disposable time to volunteer during the traditional two-week holiday period at the end of December and the beginning of January. Some interviewed participants were contacted after the interview to clarify points I was unsure about or to request further information on issues raised during the interview.

4.3.3 Interview experiences and self-reflection

Conducting successful qualitative semi-structured interviews is a difficult art to master. It involves much more than asking questions and getting answers (Fontana and Frey 2000, 697). The successful semi-structured interview involves striking a balance between allowing informants the freedom to divulge information they deem relevant and useful to the topic under discussion, while also endeavouring to elicit the 'thick description' from informants that relates to the research questions and

² The *Irish Times* has a daily readership of approximately 319,000 (Audit Bureau of Circulations 2010).

³ Although misrecognition of the aims and purposes of the research did occur on a few occasions. For example, in one case a suitable candidate contacted me regarding an interview, and informed me that she would only be interested in participating in the research if she was financially remunerated for her time. I refused to countenance such requests. In another few instances, returned emigrants from the United States who fell outside the parameters of the study's focus on a particular migrant cohort contacted me regarding an interview. In these cases, I politely explained that the focus of the research was on the late-1980s/early-1990s emigrants, and informed them that it was beyond my study's scope to examine their experiences. More controversially, a few return migrants from Northern Ireland contacted me regarding an interview. I had to explain that the study focuses only on returnees from the Republic of Ireland. In a further few instances, returnees from destinations other than the United States contacted me regarding an interview. Again, I had to explain that the focus on my research was on returnees from the United States only, and therefore it would not be appropriate for me to interview them at that time.

aims. The interviewer must not appear overbearing, brusque, or supercilious, but neither must the interview become a desultory series of disconnected vignettes. Simply put, the successful semi-structured interview is “a conversation with a purpose” (Valentine 2005, 111). It is up to the interviewer to direct this conversation down the right avenues. As discussed above, establishing a rapport and developing trust and openness with informants is imperative to successful interviewing (Kvale 1996). As I progressed with the interviews, I developed a number of techniques to deal with the challenges of qualitative semi-structured interviewing.

Interviews ranged in nature from the reticent to the rollicking. During one interview shortly after commencing the fieldwork, the atmosphere was awkward as I failed to establish a proper rapport with the informant. My questions were answered with overly terse responses, and the interview ended abruptly. In an effort to avoid such situations in the future, I actively attempted to influence the atmosphere of the interview situation to help respondents feel more ‘at home’ around me. First, I altered my use of language to reflect the ‘emic’ point of view (Schwandt 1994). Addressing issues of migration and home in non-academic, colloquial language elicited more nuanced, detailed descriptions of participants’ feelings and the meanings they attached to these processes. I phrased questions in an inviting, exploratory manner. For example, following Valentine (2005), I introduced questions with phrases such as “Tell me about . . .,” or “What was it like for you . . .” Second, dressing appropriately for interviews helped establish a stronger rapport with informants. Participants were likely to take me more seriously as a social researcher if I did not wear overly casual apparel (Valentine 2005). Therefore, I choose to wear professional-looking attire at all interviews.

In the wake of feminist and postmodernist research calling for a reflexive commitment and awareness in research practice, it is increasingly recognized in the social sciences that interviewing is never a neutral exchange of asking questions and receiving answers (Atkinson and Silverman 1997; Denzin 1997; Ellis and Bochner 1996, 2000; Hart 1998; Hertz 1997; Katz 1994). As Cindi Katz (1994) points out, in the post-positivist world of social science, we have forgone the illusion of neutrality,

and are aware of the nature of storytelling and stories – and the artifice of boundaries drawn in order to tell them. Consistent with the interpretative foundations of this research, I endeavoured to adopt an ‘empathetic’ approach to interviewing (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). This involved attempting to allow the informants to speak in their own voice, and to emphasize a partnership approach to the interview process (Fontana and Frey 2000). The interview is understood here as an ‘active’ process that is the result of a contextually bound and mutually created story. Kong et al. (2002) call for interviews to adopt a ‘methodology of friendship’. This is achieved in a *quid pro quo* process whereby the interviewer also reveals personal feelings and private confessions to the interviewee about the issues under discussion. During the interview process, I discovered that adopting a conversational, quasi-confessional approach to interviewing was a successful method of eliciting rich data from my informants. I openly addressed my own subject position, my situated knowledge (Haraway 1988), as a fellow return migrant (albeit not from the United States, and not from the same generation or cohort as my informants), and discussed my own senses of attachment to the Republic of Ireland. I revealed to my informants that I had occasional difficulties locating and recognizing the contours of that place I call ‘home’, and was curious as to why I always felt compelled to return to the Republic. This technique of ‘sharing’ common experiences elicited richer data from respondents than in the initial interviews where I was often reticent about discussing my own experiences of homecoming.

Adopting an empathetic approach to the semi-structured interviews resulted in establishing a friendship with some participants. I am still actively in touch with two of my informants. They continue to inquire after the state of my research, contributing to an iterative process of refinement whereby I constantly clarify and build upon my understanding of their experiences of migration and returning home. Through these friendships with return migrants, and the research process in general, I have also engaged in a self-reflexive and enlightening experience, as I live and think through the processes of return, home-making, identity and belonging. Most of the participants who got in touch with me via the Letter to the Editor expressed enthusiasm for my research. They thought it an important and, revealingly, a

neglected research topic. After the interview-proper had ended, they often thanked me sincerely for giving them the opportunity to reflect on and discuss issues they felt to be of huge relevance not only to their personal lives but also to a wider generational experience.

It is necessary to recognize the limits of this post-positivist boundary blurring in social science, however. The researcher must remain vigilant and hold in check this impulse to over-identify with participants (Lynch 2000). Despite doffing any claims to neutrality in the interview process, it remains the fact that it is still the researcher, and not the researched, who chooses the overall thematic direction of the interview and interprets interviewees' responses. El-Or (1992, 22), when discussing the issue of establishing a friendship with a research participant, claims, "We can't be friends because she was the object and we both know it." Atkinson and Silverman (1997) similarly argue that despite efforts and tactics to make the interview process as non-hierarchical and non-oppressive as possible, the overall analysis of the interview data still remains the fiat of the researcher. I was mindful of the limitations of reflexivity and power brokering between interviewer and interviewee subject-positions. The relationship is not a symmetrical one, and, in the words of Rosalind Edwards and Melanie Mauthner (2002, 27), this is "neither possible nor desirable." Regardless of what criteria, tactics, techniques and stratagems adopted in interviewing, interviews can never be entirely reciprocal.

4.4.4 Interview transcription and analysis

There is no one method for transcribing audio-recorded interviews (Flick 2006). However, it is generally accepted that the rigor and degree of verisimilitude in transcription should correspond to the requirements of the research questions (Crang 2002, 2005; Lofland and Lofland 1995). As this study employs narrative analysis of interview data, it was decided that a rigorous method of transcription would be necessary (Riessman 1993). Narrative analysis, as will be described below, is not just interested in *what* people say, but in the *way* they say it (Mishler 1991). Shortly after the completion of each interview I transcribed the audio-recordings.

In an effort to capture both what informants said and the way they communicated it, all statements made by the informants and myself were noted in full, along with significant pauses, hesitations, demurrals and interruptions. I used standard punctuation marks such as full stops, parentheses, commas, hyphens and ellipses to indicate the rhythm and flow of informants' speech and voice. Where informants place a certain emphasis or stress on a particular word or phrase, italicization is used. This rigorous transcription process proved very time consuming, with each hour of speech taking approximately eight hours to transcribe.

Immediately after each interview I took detailed notes on the interview context. I noted the mood and atmosphere of the interview, documented informants' non-verbal bodily communications, as well as recorded my own impressions and immediate interpretation of the interview. In addition, I highlighted the issues and themes that informants either rose to or seemed uninterested in. These context notes subsequently allowed me to refine the interview guide, placing either more or less stress on emerging themes as they related to the research questions. These field notes became my 'research diary' (Bryman 2004, 141). As I transcribed each interview shortly after the completion of the interview, I was able to improve my interview technique and rephrase questions in a manner that elicited a more natural flow of conversation from informants. I transcribed each interview in consultation with my research diary. In this way I became very familiar with the material, and was able to conduct an iterative, ongoing analysis of emerging themes.

After the formal interviews were over and I had turned off the recording device, I often held casual conversations with informants about the research. These informal conversations proved a font of supplementary evidence, as informants frequently 'opened up' after the audio-recorder was switched off. After the first few interviews I learned to keep the recorder going after the interview proper had ceased, and listened attentively as informants related additional data about their experiences of return. In Chapters 5, 6, 7 and 8, I weave and integrate this material into the analysis of the interview data. As mentioned earlier, all bar one of the interviews were audio-

recorded. In this one instance, I took notes at appropriate times during the interview. Immediately following the interview, I wrote down a lengthy summary of the informant's responses, as well as detailed descriptive and evaluative impressions I gleaned from the interview.

There are a wide variety of approaches to analyzing interview text in the social sciences, ranging from grounded theory, semiotics, hermeneutics, discourse and conversational analysis (Silverman 1993). The 'narrative turn' (Carr 1986) in social sciences emphasizes the storied nature of experience, where protagonists are 'storied selves' whose lives are "told in being lived and lived in being told" (Carr 1986, 61). As Catherine Riessman (2002, 127) states, "Storytelling, to put the argument simply, is what we do with research and clinical materials, and what informants do with us. The approach does not assume objectivity but, instead, privileges positionality and subjectivity." Narrative analysis is an umbrella-term that covers an array of techniques and approaches for studying the stories that people tell themselves and others in order to understand their position in the world (Wiles et al. 2005). Given the centrality of the interview material to this research, and the interpretivist stress on understanding the meanings that participants attribute to their feelings and experiences, this research adopted some of the techniques of narrative analysis for interpreting the interview text.

While there is no prevailing consensus on what narrative analysis entails, Riessman (2002) delineates four major characteristics of the approach. The first type of narrative analysis she identifies – thematic analysis narrative – places an emphasis on *what* is said rather than on *how* it is said. It underscores and codes the main thematic emphasis of an interview. The second type – structural analysis of narrative – places an emphasis on the *way* a story is told rather than on *what* is told. Structural narrative analysis does not dispense with the content of talk, but places increased stress on *how* the story is told. The third type – performative analysis of narrative – places an emphasis on the non-verbal, gestural dimensions of narrative. This involves paying close attention to the paralinguistic utterances, false starts, interruptions and demurrals of storytellers. The fourth type – interactional analysis of narrative –

places an emphasis on the interaction and rapport between the teller of the story and the listener. Integral to this approach is examining the dialogic co-constitution of meaning by both parties in the conversation. Furthermore, following an interpretative epistemology, this approach emphasizes the constructed nature of meaning through the interactive talk of individuals in society.

The analysis of the transcribed interview data drew from all four aspects of narrative analysis. I initially conducted a thematic analysis of the transcribed data, reading the text carefully a number of times to look for leitmotifs running throughout the interviews. Following Riessman (1993, 2002), I highlighted the ideational content of interview talk. Ideational content refers to the information that people intend their words to convey. This analysis provides a rough thematic overview of the data before looking at more subtle modes of narrative analysis. The next step was to conduct a structural analysis of the interview data. I followed Labov's (1972) and Gee's (1990) pioneering structural analytic techniques, paying close attention to the 'prosody of the text' (Labov 1972). This involved examining evaluative descriptions, adjectives and emphasis that participants place on certain points during the interview. It also involved highlighting the "pitch, loudness, stress, and length assigned to various syllables as well as the way in which the speaker hesitates or pauses" (Gee 1990, 104-105). Informants' words are never conveyed in monotone, but are laced with layers of wit, irony, humour, enthusiasm, sarcasm, and so on. These linguistic units are recognized as forming larger semantic units that contribute to the themes emerging from the text. When particular emphasis or stress is placed on certain words or phrases in the interview, I italicized these. I elaborated on the connotative meanings of these italicized words and phrases in the margins of the interview transcripts.

Supporting this structural analysis, the next step was to conduct a performative analysis of the interview data. This involved, following Goffman's (1963, 1969) emphasis on the 'staged', dramaturgical presentation of self in social settings, examining the bodily dispositions of informants. Rather than the 'revelation' of subjective experience, the way informants present themselves to both themselves and

the interviewer are seen as indicative of the positioned identities that informants wish to project. These paralinguistic expressions were recorded in my research diary at the end of each interview, and when read in conjunction with the interview transcripts, added a further layer of analysis to the interview data. Finally, I conducted an interactional analysis on the interview data. This involved recognizing the ‘messiness’ of talk, and the multilayered nature of discourse (Gee 1990). Informants’ words were not taken as unmediated expressions of their lived experience, but were examined for slippages into and traces of the social context in which their narratives were framed. Despite informants’ claims to agency, social discourse and politics always influence narrative-construction (Wiles et al. 2005). Examining the dialogic nature of the interview exchanges, as well as highlighting the wider socio-cultural discourses informants relied on to shape their narratives, added a further layer of interpretation and analysis to the interview data (Eastmond 2007). The overlapping voices of informants, interviewer and wider discourses competing in the interview setting reveals a great deal not only about the explicit topic of home and return migration, but also about the social and historical background to Irish migration. As Wiles et al. (2005, 92) state in relation to this multilayered nature of interview talk,

This ‘messiness’ is particularly useful within the interview situation, because narratives within interview talk (or interviews themselves viewed as whole narratives) can be very revealing about wider social and spatial relations, norms and values as much about the more specific experiences of groups or individuals involved in a study.

It is important to point out that narrative analysis pays close attention to the hermeneutic process involved in the researcher’s own “activity of making sense” (Schwandt 1994). Narrative analysis is not so naïve as to believe that there is a transparent transfer of talk from tongue to tape-recorder to transcript to text. Rather, narrative analysis is interpretive on the part of both the narrator and the researcher who facilitates the narrative. Therefore, it is both the informant and the interviewer who tell stories (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). While the informant interprets his/her own life story, the interviewer further interprets the informants’ words. Ultimately, it

is the interviewer as social researcher who frames the research questions and agenda, decides on the degree of verisimilitude in interview transcription, and, through thematic coding, decides what parts of the transcript to focus on. Regardless of intentions, all approaches to narrative analysis truncate somewhat the richness and messiness of human expression and interview talk (Hoggart et al. 2001).

The use of narrative analysis of the interview text generated for this research is particularly relevant to the current study's focus on the understandings of home among Irish-born return migrants from the United States. How home and homecoming were understood and constructed by informants was a central feature of the interviews. Given the interpretivist stance of this research, narrative analysis provides a highly useful, practical and effective method for analyzing the interview data (Silverman 1993; Vandsemb 1995). Just as interpretivist methodologies are interested in the subjective understandings and meanings that respondents attach to their experience of events, narrative analysis is concerned with interpreting and understanding the layers of meaning in interview talk (Wiles et al. 2005). Narrative analysis of interview thus provides an appropriate way of unearthing the embedded and often tacit meanings that participants attach to their ideas, experiences and understandings of home in the post-return context.

The analysis presented in subsequent chapters relies on these techniques, with an expectation of finding notable differences in the narratives associates with class and gender. It is important to note, however, that my narrative analysis of the interview data found little evidence to suggest that class and gender issues plays a significant role in determining participants' ideas of home upon return. Numerous academic studies have examined the ways in which home intersects with questions of class and/or gender (Bondi 1992; Davidoff and Hall 2002; hooks 1991; Khater 2001; Martin and Mohanty 1986; McDowell 1999; Pearce 2000; Pratt and Yeoh 2003; Rose 1993). During the interviews themselves, the question of class did not arise as a concern for almost all participants. Perhaps one explanation for this is that the vast majority of participants were generally content with their careers and employment status. Most of those I spoke with who were in employment at the time of interview

were happy in their current occupations, while those seeking employment were optimistic about their future working prospects. Of course, it is worth remembering that the interviews took place during a period of rapid economic expansion in the Republic of Ireland. As mentioned in Chapter 3, employment in the state reached record figures during the research period. This may be one explanation for why an explicit class dimension is missing from participants' narratives of home in the current thesis. Equally surprising is the absence of a clearly gendered dimension to participants' accounts of home. The narrative analysis of the interview texts show that both female and male participants share similar ideas, dilemmas, confusions, enthusiasms and hopes over home. The accounts of what home means for both women and men in my research do not show any distinct gender divisions. As I will show in the empirical chapters of the thesis, with regard to gender, there is a relatively even mix across the sexes in terms of how home is understood.

In short, my analysis of the interview data shows no clear-cut link between class and gender position and articulations of home. I do not suggest that these issues are unimportant or irrelevant. For participants in my research, however, class and gender did not arise as decisive thematic concerns when elaborating their ideas of home. Perhaps a refocusing of the interview questions would have elicited more animated responses from participants on these important issues. In terms of the current thesis, however, there appeared to be no deterministic connection between class and gender status and particular understandings of home. For example, a number of middle-class female participants narrate their (re)settlement experiences in ways that speak to similar conceptualizations of home articulated by some of my working-class male participants, and vice versa, as can be seen in Appendix V and in the analysis that follows.

4.3.5 Review of documents

While semi-structured interviewing was the main data collection method used in this study, the use of various documents (as discussed in Chapter 3) provided an additional rich source of data. As mentioned above, this study is informed by an interpretivist epistemology and ontology, which focuses on the meanings that informants attach to their experiences and encounters. However, as numerous authors have argued (Bourdieu 1977, Foucault 1970; Giddens 1991), human agency is not the full story. Key thinkers in French post-structuralism such as Jacques Derrida (1976), Roland Barthes (1977) and Michel Foucault (1970) show how documents are not coterminous with text, but instead argue that human subjectivity is constantly compromised and constituted by textual sources that are ostensibly external to the rational human mind (Bauer and Gaskell 2000; Dobson and Ziemann 2009). Lindsay Prior (2003, 3) notes that, while there continues to be a widespread, common-sense attitude that regards documents merely as text, as textual, “things, such as documents and the information they contain, can influence and structure human agency every bit as effectively as the agents influence the things.”

Following Prior, the documentary ‘things’ used to construct this study’s contextual background were examined in Chapter 3. In Chapter 3 I argued that Irish-born return migrants from the United States cannot be considered as entirely framed by media, government and policy viewpoints on Irish migration, but neither can their return be fully understood without reference to these various perspectives. In other words, both human agency and sedimented discourses influence decision-making and the course of events. In an iterative process before, during and after immersion in the field site, I examined the Central Statistics Office’s two most recent census reports: namely, the *2002 Census of Population Report* and the *2006 Census of Population Report*. I examined the figures in these reports relating to the age and gender composition of late-1980s/early-1990s Irish emigration. From these two censuses, I was also able to estimate the number of immigrants coming into the country between the years 1996-2006 from the total number of returning Irish-born migrants. In addition, I examined Government policy responses to Irish migration. Specifically, I examined the Task Force Report on Policy Regarding Emigrants, which contained a chapter dedicated to policy responses and suggestions related to returning Irish-born migrants. I discussed

the various improvements in, and limitations of, statutory welfare and service provision to return migrants. I examined the promotional literature of the Jobs Ireland Campaign – a government-funded programme run by the state’s Nation Training and Employment Agency (FÁS) designed to attract Irish migrants to return to live and work in the country. The presentation of migration figures derived from Census reports and the examination of policy responses presents one aspect of the contextual framework for this study.

I also examined various public statements surrounding the issues of Irish emigration and return. Using internet search engines I identified a number of documents addressing the issue of Irish emigration and return, primarily government and presidential speeches. I searched the online archives of a number of newspapers – including the *Irish Times*, *Irish Independent*, *Irish Voice* and the *Evening Herald* – for special reports and stories relating to Irish return migration. This generated a number of news stories, feature articles, editorials and ‘Letters to the editor’ on return migrants, which I examined in the previous chapter. Finally, I examined popular non-fiction books that discuss the sociological profile of contemporary Irish return migrants (McWilliams 2005, 2008). Analysis of these documents broadly follows a qualitative content analysis approach (Altheide 1996). Documents were read several times, using highlighter pens to identify the thematic content directly related to the issues of migration and return. Identification and analyses of these themes helps to establish and understand the context in which to situate issues of home as they relate to Irish-born return migrants from the United States (as discussed in Chapter 3).

4.4 Representation, rigor and reflexivity

Ever since Werner Heisenberg’s articulation of the ‘uncertainty principle’ in physics in 1927 – whereby the very act of observation alters the object being observed – the conceit of neutrality and interpretive omnipotence of the objective scientist has been shattered. These debates in quantum physics have percolated to and left their mark on the social sciences, and culminated in the late-1980s with the ‘crisis of

representation' in the human sciences (Clifford 1988; Geertz 1988; Marcus and Fischer 1986). Qualitative researchers engaged in soul-searching reflections on the research process, giving warts-and-all confessional accounts of the steps taken to variously conceive, design, collate, analyze, write-up and disseminate research questions, data and results. As a result of this crisis of representation, a general shift from ethnography as the standard tool in qualitative research practices to auto-ethnography has been observed (Reed-Dahanehy 1997). The traditional notion of the ethnographer is that of the 'outsider' who seeks to understand the 'insider' view of the 'natives' (Narayan 1993). The auto-ethnographer, on the other hand, is committed to the revelation of personal, biased interventions on the researcher's behalf, and does not deliberately delete or obscure these self-reflexive moments from the research process and results – as the traditional ethnographic account supposedly does (Comaroff and Comaroff 2003).

The crisis of representation, however, led commentators to claim that social research offers nothing more than another 'spin' on the social world. They claim that research 'findings' are nothing more than 'interpretations', 'observations' nothing more than 'readings' (Rosenau 1992). Research is the result of rhetorical effects, and once the nuts and bolts of the research process are made transparent, the social researcher is seen as nothing more than yet another storyteller giving her/his version of events (Geertz 1988). If, as Denzin (1994, 296) puts it, traditional ethnographic texts were concerned with a "world out there (the real) that can be captured by a 'knowing' author through the careful transcription and analysis of field materials (interviews, notes, etc.)," then writing in the wake of the crisis of representation "can never be a final, accurate representation of what was meant or said, only different textual representations of different experiences." In fact, the crisis of representation, together with the attendant concern with reflexivity, has led to an increased awareness of writing and the writing process in social research (Clifford 1988). Unlike previous ethnographic accounts that aimed to blot out the role of the researcher in knowledge construction, ethnographic 'tales of the field' (Van Maanen 1988) pay particular attention to the inevitability of authorial intrusion. In this light, James Clifford's

(1988, 3) question – “how is unruly experience transformed into an authoritative written account?” – takes on a renewed saliency and urgency.

As discussed above, I was mindful the research process of debates about reflexivity in the social sciences. The research questions were shaped and influenced to an extent by my own family’s migration history. Throughout the interview process, I endeavored to be as open and transparent as possible about the research aims and purposes. In writing my ‘tales of the field’, there is, as Lincoln and Denzin (1994, 582) claim, “the concern for validity, or certainty in the text as a form of isomorphism and authenticity. On the other hand there is the sure and certain knowledge that all texts are socially, historically, politically, and culturally located. We, like the texts we write, can never be transcendent.” This dual concern with ‘truth’ and awareness of the situatedness of all ‘truths’ informed the writing process. My role throughout this research was never that of a detached observer. Mirroring Nash’s (2008, ix) observations on her own research journey, my thumbprints are all over this thesis, as the questions addressed throughout “have never been simply conceptual puzzles explored through empirical materials detached from my own considerations of origins, identity and belonging.”

While I am mindful of the arguments informing the crisis of representation and calls for increased reflexivity, in the end they are given only a limited endorsement in my research. In recent years an excess of reflexivity and an exaggeration of the crisis in reporting research has been discerned (Butz and Besio 2004; Lynch 2000). Pierre Bourdieu (2003, 282) claims that the concern with autoethnography and reflexivity “tends to substitute the facile delights of self-exploration for the methodical confrontation with the gritty realities of the field.” According to Bourdieu (2003, 282), this has led to a situation where social research consists of

observing oneself observing, observing the observer in his [*sic*] work of observing or of transcribing his [*sic*] observations ... and, last but not least, on the narrative of all these experiences which leads, more often

than not, to the rather disheartening conclusion that all is in the final analysis nothing but discourse, text, or, worse yet, pretext for text.

Likewise, Cindi Katz (2002) urges caution when stressing the textual nature of social science research. As Katz (2002, 71) states,

It is tempting to imagine that nothing more than manipulative rhetoric produces descriptions of social life that convey a 'you-are-there' sense of immediacy. But if all that were required was the motivation to manipulate readers, such passages would be more common; it seems they are not that easy to pull off.

If social research is nothing more than rhetorical flourishes on behalf of the researcher, it begs the question, why bother then? Why does the researcher spend months in advance of departure for the field researching the topic and designing research questions? Why does the researcher then spend months in the field gathering data through a variety of methods? And finally, why does the researcher return from the field weighed-down with a rucksack full of research notes and transcripts to spend months again crafting a piece of writing that persuades her/his peers/readers that it is a credible piece of original research? In other words, if social research is not any different from fiction, memoir, or creative writing, why do we as social researchers even bother in the first place with the myriad measures and protocols such as ethical clearance, informed consent, archival research, and so on, that informs our research practices? Bryman's (2004) answer to these vexing questions is to claim that we need to get away from the idea that rhetoric and the desire to persuade others of the validity of social research are somehow bad things. Social research is not fiction. We need to move from a crisis of representation to embrace the 'challenge of representation'. In writing and reporting this research, I claim that my thesis is more than a wily narrative that hoodwinks, via the writer's conjuring tricks, its readers into believing its claims to 'truth'. Through the rigor of the research process, with all its attendant checks and balances, I hope to convince the reader of the findings presented in this thesis.

4.5 Limitations of the methodology

As Gail Davies and Claire Dwyer (2007, 258) note in their progress report on qualitative methods, “human geographers continue to study texts, to conduct interviews, to conduct focus groups and to engage in ethnography. . . . So for the time being, this suite of methods remains the backbone of qualitative research in human geography.” My research has been heavily informed by these approaches to data collection. Nigel Thrift (2000, 3) critiques this vein of qualitative research. He is bemused by what he sees as “how narrow this range of skills still is, how wedded [geographers] still are to the notion of bringing back the ‘data’, and then re-presenting it (nicely packaged up as a few supposedly illustrative quotations), and the narrow range of sensate life they register.” However, Alan Latham (2003) argues that Thrift’s claims are exaggerated, considering the variety of methodologically innovative work currently conducted by qualitatively-driven human geographers. Nevertheless, Latham concedes that Thrift’s critique hits on the pulse of something important: namely, the methodological timidity that informs much human geography research.

My methodology shows some of the narrowness and timidity that Thrift observes in qualitative research. The research did not engage in non-representational and embodied forms of knowing that have been prevalent in recent methodological debates and human-geographical practice (Jacobs and Nash 2003; Thrift 2000). One method to capture informants’ understandings of home might have been to video-record them in their homes. This would have shifted some of the burden of evidence away from textual and interview methods used in human geography to include a visual dimension to the analysis. However, it was decided that video-recording was not a suitable method of data collection during the fieldwork period due to time limitations. If I had had the opportunity to become better acquainted with informants I may have eventually built up sufficient confidence, trust and rapport with them to enter their homes with video-recording equipment. In any event, I had to make-do with one-off semi-structured interviews. In certain cases participants showed me

photographs of their former homes in the United States. This photographic evidence was a rich visual source of data. I felt that asking for this material evidence at that stage an intrusion too far into participants' lives.

My research displays a heavy reliance on textual data, giving some credence to Thrift's claim that it registers only a 'narrow range of sensate life'. Nevertheless, Thrift underestimates the potential of textual sources when he claims that human geographers simply bring back this conventional textual data from the field and merely re-package it into conveniently bespoke quotes. As the preceding discussions on narrative analysis and writing practices in social research show, social scientists are far from unaware of the implications of reporting and representing research. This study's commitment to an interpretivist approach, together with the rigorous collection and analysis of data, ensures that its limited array of methods does not significantly detract from the findings. Discussing the use of more conventional methods in qualitative research, Latham (2003, 2000) states that "pushed in the right direction there is no reason why these methods cannot be made to dance a little." I tend to agree.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter explored and justified the methodological approach and methods used in this thesis. I demonstrated how adopting an interpretivist stance offers a useful approach for uncovering and understanding the oft-occluded meanings that migrants attach to the notion of home. The choice of field site and the selection criteria for recruiting participants to take part in the research process were clearly laid out and explained. In addition, I reflected on my own 'position' in the field as a fellow return migrant, and clarified why I object to excesses of 'reflexivity' in social science research. I discussed and justified the use of semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. A number of documentary sources were also consulted, allowing for triangulation of the research data. These combined data-sources strengthened the validity of the research findings. However, inherent to each research project and its attendant methodological choices are weaknesses and limitations. The

shortcomings of this particular study were outlined, and alternate approaches were discussed.

The rich descriptions of participants' understandings of home in the post-return context, to be discussed in the following empirical chapters, attests to the ongoing usefulness and vitality of intensive, qualitative approaches for examining social phenomena. I hope that the data gathered through the interviews and my subsequent analysis and interpretation of the interview texts gives the reader a unique insight into the compelling concept of home. As I demonstrate in the following four empirical chapters, the ethnographic methods I employ in this thesis allow me to explore the complexities of home in a sustained and systematic manner.

Chapter 5 Motivations for return: Reasons and myths

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I analyse the reasons that participants offer for making the decision to leave the United States and return to live in the Republic of Ireland. I contend that before examining participants' ideas of home in the post-return context, it is important to investigate why they made the concrete decision to return in the first place, because their return decisions may be shaped by the meanings they attach to the notion of home at the time of departure. I must mention, however, that participants' reasons for returning were all recounted retrospectively. At the time of interview, all participants were resident in the Republic of Ireland for a minimum of six months. There is a high probability that the time-lapse between making the return decision in the United States and discussing it in hindsight in the Republic of Ireland alters the justifications for the migration choice.

With this in mind, I show that participants' decisions to return are complex, with the stimuli triggering the homecoming in many instances a response to changing environmental factors in both the United States and the Republic of Ireland. Despite this, I argue that alongside and overlaying the practical, everyday pull and push considerations that prompt mobility decisions is a more abstract and general notion of the 'myth of home' that heavily informs participants' justification for the return decision. I show that this 'myth of home' stems from certain expectations surrounding homecoming, expectations to do with re-insertion into a familiar, predictable and bounded home. I demonstrate further that the expectation of return-as-homecoming, as the closure and completion of the migration journey, in framing mobility decisions is not unvarying, but is contingent on how participants perceive their migration choices as coinciding with major life cycle transitions. I consider how, for many participants, expectations of the return environment as a settled and fixed place assumes a priority as they reach what they understand and construct as natural watersheds in the life cycle. For many participants, these watershed moments are associated with relinquishing the supposed callowness of life in the United States and commencing on the allegedly more established phase of 'settling down' in the Republic of Ireland. As a major determinant of the return decision, I argue that this

expectation of finding the conditions to settle down in the return environment is significant because it reveals certain aspects of participants' ideas of home.

5.2 Conditionality reigns: Overview of return motivations

Academic accounts of return migration frequently depict the return decision as a complex and confusing issue for migrants. Numerous efforts to draw up a return typology all highlight the diversity of motivations guiding migration behaviour (Cassarino 2004; Constant and Massey 2002; Dustmann and Weiss 2007; Gmelch 1980; Harper 2005). Many portraits of return migrants emphasise their failure, inability or unwillingness to adequately integrate or adapt to the economic and socio-cultural norms of their host society, resulting in a lack of investment in the country of immigration, while at the same time offering an incentive to return to the country of origin (Beenstock 1996; Bovenkerk 1974; Cerase 1974; Long and Oxfeld 2004). Other approaches to return migration focus on migrants' successful achievement of various objectives and targets in the destination country, thereby facilitating the decision to return (Duval 2004, 2005; Thomas-Hope 2002). In most cases, a twofold combination of 'pull' and 'push' factors in both the host and home countries intersect in the decision-making process, complicating and obscuring any efforts to establish a taxonomy of return motives (King and Christou 2006; Markowitz and Stefansson 2004). In a review of return-migration typologies and the diversity of reasons guiding the return decision in the Caribbean region, Conway et al. (2005, 5) conclude that "Conditionality reigns!" This diversity of return-reasons is also present among participants in my study. The overview of participants' reasons for returning offers no clear pattern underlying return motivations, but instead suggests a complex intersection of push and pull factors as a response to changing conditions in both the United States and the Republic of Ireland (See Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Participants' reasons for returning to the Republic of Ireland

Reasons for return related to	Women	Men
<i>'Push' factors</i>		
9/11 terrorist attacks	1	1
Bush administration	1	2
Undocumented in US	0	2
Personal health problems	1	0
<i>'Pull' factors</i>		
Family connections	11	12
Friends	7	9
Irish culture	5	7
Spontaneous decisions	2	0
Unexpected circumstances	5	4
Irish economy	18	19
'Myth of home'	15	16
Total number of participants who responded:		37

When asked to explain their reasons for deciding to return to the Republic of Ireland, a small minority of participants cite explicit push factors in the United States as the principal determinant of the return decision.⁴ For those who mention adverse

⁴ Of course, a further 'push' factor for Irish-born return migrants from the United States is the possibility of deportation. The research design did not deliberately exclude those who were deported

conditions in the United States as the single most important stimulus for return, three main causes emerge. First, two participants who were undocumented migrants in the United States cite fatigue with living an increasingly informal and ‘underground’ existence (and its associated hardships), especially since the crackdown on ‘illegal’ migrants in the wake of the terrorist attacks in New York City on September 11th, 2001. Second, other participants – both documented and undocumented – mention what they perceived as the changed face of the United States under the administration of President George W Bush as a major push factor motivating the return home. Third, others mention the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers in New York City as precipitating a psychological shock with living in the United States, motivating a return to what they perceive as the safer environment of the Republic of Ireland.

Like there for a while, I couldn’t even renew my driving licence, and you’re depending on fellows to pick you up for work, and you’re in dread of being caught and maybe deported and leaving everything at the drop of a hat (Interview with Patrick, 08/01/2008).

Both my wife and I had some misgivings about post-9/11 America and the way things have moved there since then, and the route Bush was going down, and the fact that at some point the kid could get drafted, and we talked about those things (Interview with Dan, 26/11/2007).

I just remember the day the planes crashed into the Twin Towers, I had friends working in there, and I used to work just around the corner myself, and I went into a state of shock for a while. And I just felt, this is not my battle, I’m going home (Interview with Mary, 04/09/2007).

from the United States from participating in the research. However, while the research includes a number of participants who were undocumented throughout their time in the United States, no deportees were identified for interview during the data collection period. Presumably, their accounts of the ‘push’ and ‘pull’ factors influencing migration behaviour would differ considerably from the overview of return reasons presented here.

Similar to research on return migration in other contexts (Condon 2005; Gmelch 1980; Lidgard and Gilson 2002), however, analysis of participants' narratives shows that explicit push factors play a less important role than pull factors in prompting the decision to return. When asked why they decided to return to the Republic of Ireland from the United States, all participants were mindful of the changed economic circumstances and opportunities of the Celtic Tiger era. Numerous participants cite awareness of good job prospects and potential for career advancement upon return as a major stimulus in influencing the decision to return. The following quotation captures this sense of optimism and confidence surrounding participants' livelihood forecasts in informing the return decision.

Then you'd see on these websites that all these financial companies were opening up in Dublin, and I started going, "Jesus, I can do that fucking job!" I couldn't fucking believe it. And then I saw that Bloomberg, Chase Manhattan had opened, 200 jobs in Dublin! I couldn't believe this! And then I could actually go home and do the same thing I'm doing here, but live at home! Really, that was just unbelievable to me. And really, once I started seeing that, I was just, "I'm going to get through my degree, get as much experience as I can here, and get straight back to Dublin" (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

Migration scholars generally recognise that migration decisions are rarely, if ever, made solely in the interests of upward social mobility through economic means (Halfacree and Boyle 1993). Numerous studies problematize economic-rational migration models that conceptualize migrant behaviour as a response to the pull of greater earning potential elsewhere (Conway 2005; Halfacree 2004). Instead, the focus shifts to the non-economic motives guiding migration decisions in an effort to capture a fuller understanding of the complexity of migration processes (Lawson 1999, 2000). In the context of my research, while awareness of the changed economic outlook of the Republic of Ireland is widespread among participants, economic considerations alone do not emerge as an overwhelming motivation in their narratives of return. Instead, the Celtic Tiger economy provides a favourable set

of circumstances and conditions surrounding the prospects of return, and forms a backdrop to participants' more personal accounts of the decision to relocate home.

Alongside this changed contextual background of a maturing and expanding economy, then, many participants explicitly mention emotional factors such as closer proximity to family, friends and Irish culture as major pull factors in influencing the decision to return (see Table 5.1). Chambers (1994) argues that inherently bound-up with migration decision-making are issues relating to place, identity and subjectivity. Previous studies of return migration to the Republic of Ireland find that return decision-making is often directly related to the presence of family ties, friendship networks and cultural attachments in the home country (Corcoran 2003; Jones 2003; Ní Laoire 2007, 2008). Similarly in my research, interwoven into participants' economic rationales for return are notions of closer proximity to family, friends and Irish culture as significant motivations for return.

I have two nieces in Sligo, and I have missed all their growing up, and I wanted to be closer to be around that (Interview with Elaine, 17/11/2007).

My mother and father are still here and I miss them, some part of them. And they are not getting any younger and we all know they will not be around forever, so . . . (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2007).

I missed it. It was just little things I missed, like football results coming in on a Saturday evening at five o'clock, or family events, or Christmas, or people just saying, "Oh, we're going off to this pub this evening," and you'd be saying, "What pub is that? I don't know it." And they'd go, "It's a new place," and you'd go, "Fuck, I wish I was there." So it was a load of different things. So I was just, "Fuck it, I'm going home" (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

For some participants, the emergence of unexpected circumstances in the Republic of Ireland (deteriorating health or death of loved ones, sudden opportunity to advance educational qualifications, and so on) serves as a catalyst to making the move home. It is the emergence of unanticipated push and pull factors in both the United States and the Republic of Ireland, however, that combine to propel many participants into a dilemma over remaining or returning.

When we bought a house and the children were going to school and we were both working the idea of returning wasn't in our minds at all. We were in America to stay in America. But at the back of our minds we knew that if we were ever to return to Ireland one of us would have to have a job. And just one day at work, I remember it was a Tuesday, Colleen [a former work colleague] from work rang me and asked me, "How would you care about coming back to work in the newspaper in Sligo?" I had worked there before I left, and I remember thinking this is the last thing I need! I didn't want to think about it and have to make that decision (Interview with Harry, 02/02/2008).

At a certain stage I reckoned I was in San Francisco for good. And then talk of going home came up. I said to my wife that I don't think it will be as easy as you think it will be. Once the romance [of being back in the Republic of Ireland] is gone the romance is gone out of it. So we just chatted about it and chatted about it. We didn't make the decision over night. Unlike the decision to go, the decision to come back was discussed a lot. She knew I was hesitant, but we came back. But for a while there we didn't know if we were coming or going (Interview with Pat, 27/10/2007).

For these participants, whose lives in the United States at one time appeared settled and grounded on a relatively permanent basis, changing circumstances combine across space and over time to alter migration intentions, and unsettle life plans that once appeared fixed. This complex to-ing and fro-ing of migration intentions, as participants struggle with the question of whether to remain or return, is exasperated

by awareness of the “laborious effort that goes into uprooting and regrounding homes” (Ahmed et al. 2003, 1). Acknowledging that the decision to return represents a dilemma, these participants hesitatingly make the reverse journey with much ambiguity, reservation and uncertainty. The following quotation captures the multilayered motivations guiding mobility decisions, as a raft of factors intersect in both the United States and the Republic of Ireland to create an ambiguous tug-of-war between staying and leaving.

After I got divorced I'd bought another house and my youngest daughter was going off to college, and my daughters, they encouraged me, they said, “Dad, your family, your brother, they are all there, you should go live in Ireland.” And when this job came up, I went over on holidays, had the interview, and the guy said, “The job is yours if you want it.” And I went back and it was a year later, and my older brother, we had a long chat one day, talking about opportunities and life and things like that, and I decided it was worth taking this opportunity, so I came back. And again it was with this idea that nothing is permanent. I mean I have my US passport, I can go back anytime. I'm in a job whereby I wouldn't have trouble finding work in the US. . . . but it wasn't for economic reasons. No. my mum is still alive, and she is pretty old now, and that's part of it. So, for family things I felt it would be good to be around for the next couple of years. . . . A major part of it was I met a woman who I used to go out with when I was eighteen. She was divorced, I was divorced, and we started to communicate and, you know, she came over to America I don't now how many times in the two years before I moved back, you know, a Dublin woman and we just hit it off, and it has been going well. But I was not just willing to leave my kids there, and I said that up front. But as they got older, they were encouraging me to do it, and in the end I decided to do it, to come back here (Interview with Willie, 4/11/2007).

This participant's complex account of the return decision-making process reveals it to be a tension-filled undertaking. Having made the decision to return, Willie ultimately hedges his bets. Securing dual citizenship of the United States and the

Republic of Ireland tempers the difficulty of the decision to return, as he is aware that he can ‘go back any time’, thereby holding open the option of re-migration to the United States. Willie’s decision to return is by no means clad in concrete, but one that has recourse to revision and re-emigration if necessary.

5.3 Return intentions: Myths and expectations of home

In this section I analyse participants’ accounts of the ‘myth of home’ in influencing their decision to return. While by no means a unanimous migrant experience, the strong and dogged desire of many diasporic groups to return to their place or country of origin is, nevertheless, such a pervasive phenomenon that it borders on the mundane, the unremarkable (Nash 2003). In its conventional formulation, often termed the ‘myth of return’, migrants hold nostalgic and romantic views of the past, with the migration journey only reaching an end with the completion of a homecoming (Christou 2008). In a vital reconceptualization of this mythic cycle, however, Al-Rasheed (1994) recognizes that the myth of return is not a natural given, but is dependent on peoples’ relationship with both their host and home countries. In this light, Atvar Brah (1996) suggests that the territorial underpinnings of the myth of return must be questioned. Nevertheless, argues Brah (1996, 190), even in the absence of a physical place to anchor the return, a “mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination” persists: namely, home. Roger Zetter (1999, 7) further analyses the conceptual and mythic dimensions of people’s return orientations, and concludes that the “myth of return is in some respects a misconceived shorthand. More accurately, what is mythologized is not return *per se*, but home. It might be more accurate to recast the myth of return as the myth of home.”

Following Zetter, then, in this section I suggest that simultaneously overlaying participants’ complex return motivations is a deeply-felt desire to respond to the lure of the myth of home in precipitating the return move. The overview of return motivations that I presented in Section 5.2 makes any generalizations or underlying motives for return migration difficult to discern. Nonetheless, in this section I contend that participants’ account of the myth of home in influencing the return decision suggests a shared framework for understanding their return motivations (See Table 5.2). I argue that alongside the welter of push and pull factors motivating

migrants' return, the role of the myth of home is to create a set of expectations surrounding homecoming to a secure, centred and settled home. These expectations, however, are qualified in a number of ways by participants. I show that participants' expectations of return-as-homecoming are not an unwavering compulsion, but grow in intensity at particular junctures in their lives: namely, the 'tipping-point' of a decade spent living in the United States; and a broader chronology of family responsibility/formation based around the notion of 'settling down' in the Republic of Ireland.

Table 5.2 Demystifying the 'myth of home'

Aspects of the myth of home	Women	Men
Expectation of 'settling down'	11	15
Reaching watershed moments of life cycle	8	7
Intergenerational responsibilities	11	8
Total number of participants who responded:	31	

Cormac, who initially cited the sudden breakdown of a long-term relationship as the main event triggering his decision to return home, expands on his opening response by admitting that

the main reason we actually broke up was probably that I couldn't commit to the United States. I couldn't give up on the idea of not coming back (Interview with Cormac, 10/01/2008).

Likewise, Jennifer and Dylan, both quoted in the previous section, at first mention a host of reasons motivating the return home. When allowed to flesh out their accounts

of deciding to return, however, both mention that they always held an intention to return.

Well, I had always thought about it. I had always thought that I would come back at some stage (Interview with Jennifer, 09/09/2007).

I don't know, David. In a way I kind of feel I was always going to come home, you know (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

Using the metaphor of the earth's tidal forces as a means of expressing the strong pull back to the country of origin, Tony states,

I feel like I was on a surfboard, that I surfed out there and then the wave brought me back in on the tide, back onto the beach (Interview with Tony, 08/09/2007).

One participant draws an analogy between the deeply-rooted drive to return and the impulse to be rid of a nagging 'splinter' stuck in one's finger (Interview with, 22/09/2007), while Diarmuid's terse response to the issue of deciding to return – "I was never a lifer" (Interview with Diarmuid, 15/05/2007) – adequately captures this pervasive attitude towards return migration held by a majority of participants in my research.

In a survey of recent scholarship on return migration to the Caribbean, Potter and Conway (2005) find that positive pull factors in the country of origin are significantly more important than negative push factors in the host society in determining the decision to return. Analysis of participants' narratives of mobility decisions in my research shows a similar disposition towards return. The strong influence of pull factors in guiding the return decision is particularly evident when participants elaborate on the notion of the myth of home. The retention of a robust intention to return among a number of participants is expressed as the myth of home at the time of relocation (see Table 5.1). These participants mention an almost-visceral yearning to return home.

I always thought I wouldn't like to be sixty or seventy years of age in America and think, having this whinge that I didn't go back. So we said that if we don't go back, maybe we won't be content either. If you never came home you'd still probably always regret not having come back to try it out (Interview with Harry, 02/02/2008).

I was always, it was always kind of like a pang that I needed to come back to Ireland. It was like something that I had left that I hadn't finished – unfinished business kind of. I came back to find out what was it that I was missing. [To find out] what was that urgency to come back, to get it out of my system (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2007).

I was just still very attached to home, and if I look at it honestly, I never seriously imagined myself not coming home. It's intriguing this feeling we have about where we come from alright. Like even when I finished university I went back for a few months, then I lived in London for a few years and I was brought back again for a while. Then after the States I just had to come back and see what's the story yet again (Interview with Stella, 23/01/2008).

I wanted to leave for some time before I came back. But things can get in the way, you know. The idea of coming back had been on my mind for a few years by the time I came back, and the main thing was, well, just to come home. You know, just to be comfortable again, back in what you know (Interview with Peter, 22/02/2008).

Emerging from these narratives of return is the resilience of a particular idea of home among a large majority of participants that influenced their migration decision-making. Despite many participants' awareness of the difficulties of return, the myth of home in diaspora at the time of relocation is a pervasive notion precipitating the return move. Harbours strong ambitions to return home is maintained through the 'whinge' and 'pang' that participants experience as part of their continued attachment to home. For these participants, the lure of home is based on a perceived idea of home at the time of relocation, which has consequences for their future

migration trajectories. As Roger-Mark De Souza (2005, 136) states, “The individual, as the ultimate decision-maker, bases the decision to move on a personal image of return that is projected onto a perceived environment in the future.” For a considerable number of participants in this research, then, the myth of home casts a positive projection onto the future home environment, as the decision to return is inflected by the pull of the Republic of Ireland itself.

This positive projection of the return environment is bound-up with participants’ expectations of homecoming. In other words, participants anticipate returning to a particular set of conditions that will facilitate (re)settlement in the Republic of Ireland. Participants ground this abstract force of the myth of home by elaborating on the precise expectations surrounding their return intentions (see Table 5.2). The following quotations display a sense of expectancy about returning to a secure, stable and grounded environment.

For years I was running around like a headless-chicken. I had gone through a load of girlfriends, had a drug problem, lived all over Boston, was married and divorced. . . . But that was because you didn’t have family around really, you can kind of get ahead of yourself. But when it came time to go home, I had all that out of my system, and was ready to move on. It was kind of like, “Start of the next chapter.” And I just thought I wanted to settle down and get my own gig (Interview with Tony, 08/09/2007).

In the early days I had a lot of visitors to the US. When people are in their twenties they are more mobile, and interested in travelling, and would have been happy just crashing on a floor. But as the years went on the visits decreased as people became more settled and less risk-taking. I had always thought about returning home, but then I reached the ten year point, and I asked myself the question, “Am I going to stay here forever? Or will I return home?” You have to ask yourself, “Where do you want to be long-term? Where are you going to settle?” (Interview with Joseph, 21/12/2007).

I mean I had to come home, it was as simple as that. I was exhausted living in New York. It's go, go, go. That rat-race idea is really true. You have to have money for rent, for food, for socializing, and you can never take a minute off. Like, my biggest fear was getting sick, because if I got sick the whole juggling act would collapse very quickly. So I was desperate to come home because I mean I wanted to leave some of that high-pressure environment behind me and just breathe (Interview with Mary, 04/09/2007).

For participants like Tony, Joseph and Mary, life in the United States is constructed as hectic and rootless, while the pace of life in the return environment is perceived as leisurely and anchored. Participants justify the return decision based on the expectation that they will find an atmosphere conducive to 'settling down' upon return. This is contrasted with the supposedly unsettling and uprooting character of life in diaspora. The sojourn abroad is spoken about more or less affectionately in terms of a 'sense of adventure' and 'travelling', while homecoming is anticipated as a new phase of the life course, where participants attest to committing to a more established, stable and permanent lifestyle. For many participants in my research, there is a perceived incompatibility between the United States and the Republic of Ireland as destinations for acquiring the trappings of a 'settled' life, and the return home takes on normative expectations as a more suitable location for the realisation of what they understand to be life's more mature undertakings: namely, 'settling down'. Participants' narrative accounts of return motivations in my research reiterate Corcoran's (2003) and Ní Laoire's (2007) findings on Irish return migration. Corcoran suggests that return migrants are driven homewards by a 'quest for anchorage', while Ní Laoire considers the promise of returning to a 'rural idyll' in motivating Irish migrants to return home. It is worth repeating that while the Republic of Ireland is by no means more or less conducive to establishing a 'settled' life than the United States, for participants in my research, this expectation of homecoming to a secure, serene environment is an influential way of making sense of their migration decisions (See Table 5.2).

A number of participants, however, qualify this expectation of return in relation to reaching watershed moments in their lives. Many participants see their sojourn in the United States as reaching a tipping-point after a certain number of years (usually a decade is the threshold where participants begin to seriously question their long-term futures), where they either commit to the United States, or return to the Republic of Ireland. The retention of the intention to return home makes them reluctant to ‘cross the Rubicon’: to pass what they perceive as the ‘point-of-no-return’ after which they believe they have burned their bridges with home and committed irrevocably to the United States.

I just felt if I don’t do it now I’ll never do it. And I didn’t know if I wanted to end up being in America for the rest of my life. That’s one of the main reasons that I came back. Almost like a dream that I had to come back. . . . If I didn’t do it I’d regret it, because I wouldn’t have done it a couple of years down the road (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2008).

The other thing was I have some uncles in America, my father’s brothers, two of them there, and they would love to come back to Ireland, and love to live back here. But they are married with kids, and the kids are grown up, and their wives are American and it will never happen for them. But they just went on past a stage, it’s like you are flying over Greenland and you can’t turn back. And I decided I didn’t want to end up like that (Interview with John, 16/11/2007).

As this last quotation suggests, there is a perception among some participants that previous generations of Irish immigrants still living in the United States hold a strong – and sometimes a crippling out-of-touch – nostalgia to return to the Republic of Ireland. Participants are emphatic that they wanted to avoid living in such a limbo-like situation, in a state of permanent to-ing and fro-ing between the United States and the Republic of Ireland. Their desire to return is motivated by a fear of becoming like that of previous generations of Irish immigrants who retained strong

expectations about homecoming, but through force of circumstance and integration into the United States, were unable to return to the Republic of Ireland.

The relationship between the timing of migration decision-making and major events of the life course is well documented by migration scholars (Fischer and Malmberg 2001; Gustafson 2001a, 2008). Similarly, the analysis of participants' expectations of homecoming that I provide in this section shows that the long-held intention to return is not a constant, unwavering compulsion, but instead waxes and wanes, altering in intensity at particular junctures in participants' lives. A number of participants claim to have led highly mobile and footloose lifestyles during their twenties/early-thirties, and procrastinated several times over making the move home. Yet, echoing Ní Laoire's (2008b) findings on Irish return migrants, many participants in my research suggest a strong association between life stage and place, as their priorities shift in time to returning home in an effort to 'settle down' (see Table 5.2). The following quotation captures this strong link between deciding to return and reaching watershed moments in life in a particularly explicit fashion.

I was probably always going to come back regardless, but one thing that was getting to me was that I'd been in the States since the early-1990s, and my fortieth was coming up. You know, it a real landmark birthday, and I knew I didn't want to celebrate it in New York. Having it at home all my family and friends would be around. . . . So I made some big decisions, and my birthday is on July 10, so I knew I'd need to be home at least a fortnight in advance of that to arrange the party (Interview with Fintan, 22/01/2008).

Some participants further qualify this tipping-point of remaining or returning in terms of various stages of family formation and kinship obligations.

But the one thing that convinced us to come back was that if we didn't come back then we'd never come back because the kids were going to start school (Interview with Pat, 27/10/2007).

Well, my father had died two years previously, and my mother was down home on her own, and I did feel that I should be around more to help her out, and to be in closer touch with my siblings, who I hadn't seen much of in fifteen years really (Interview with Joe, 20/12/2007).

As these quotations indicate, analysis of the 'point-of-no-return' narrative shows it to be inflected by a complex sense of intergenerational responsibility. For those participants with children, returning home before their offspring are too deeply immersed in the United States' educational system becomes a priority, while for both those with and without children, a sense of filial duty towards aging and/or bereaved parents takes on an increasing prominence with the passing of time (see Table 5.2).

5.4 Conclusion

As the overview of return motivations shows, participants in my research are mindful of the monumental upheaval that may be involved in relocating to the Republic of Ireland. Awareness of the predicament involved in migration choices ensures that the decision to return is by no means made capriciously. These findings support recent studies of return migration that take a more proactive approach towards homecoming (Dona and Muggeridge 2006; Hammond 1999, 2004). Rather than seeing returnees as somnambulists driven homewards by opaque mythical and nostalgic forces, recent studies of return migration foreground the active and empowering dimensions involved in returnees' mobility decisions (Stefansson 2004). Nevertheless, the compelling desire of homecoming for diasporic people remains a potent force in propelling return migration. At the same time as acknowledging the dilemma of the return decision, a narrative of return as driven by the myth of home emerges as a significant influence in framing and justifying the homecoming. The myth of home, however, is not an unvarying pull factor in guiding migration choices, but grows in intensity to coincide in many cases with normative accounts of life cycle transitions from the restiveness of life in diaspora to a more settled phase upon homecoming.

The analysis of return motivations that I presented in this chapter is important because it points towards various sets of expectations held by participants surrounding homecoming. The reasons that participants offer for deciding to return at

the time of relocation are inevitably influenced by the meanings they attach to the notion of home. If the return is justified as guided by the myth of home and influenced by the promise of ‘settling down’ upon homecoming, this suggests a model of home based on secure, stable and familiar boundaries. This expectation of homecoming to a secure, settled and bounded home may also be held by Irish-born immigrants in the United States who have not returned to the Republic of Ireland. What distinguishes participants in my research, however, is clearly the fact that they acted in a real way on this return aspiration, making the mythical prospect of return into an actualised reality. Framing the return decision around definite life plans and projects of ‘settling down’ involves attaching strong expectations to homecoming. If the projected return environment as the arena for establishing a ‘settled’ life stage is not reflected by the reality of homecoming, this may have consequences for participants’ understandings of home in the post-return context. In short, it is a high-stakes gamble. In the next chapter I begin to analyse some of the tensions between the anticipated and the actual homecoming by examining the ways in which participants understand home in terms of its dimension of location in the post-return context.

Chapter 6 The location of home

6.1 Introduction

Following Blunt and Varley's (2004) framework for analyzing conceptions of home, in this chapter I examine the first of home's three dominant dimensions – that of location. Participants in my research corroborate Blunt and Varley's heuristic insofar as they consistently refer to 'where' home is located in their attempts to define home. Yet participants' narratives of homecoming unsettle foundational accounts of home as one's ultimate place of origin/resting place, without necessarily overriding the desire to embed home in a discreetly-defined, bounded location. This chapter's analysis of home is important because it develops and contributes to the overall argument I present in this thesis that both stasis and mobility lie at the heart of home. By elucidating participants' accounts of where they locate home, I show that, even as they actively emplace and connect home translocally upon return, the longing to frame the boundaries of home along fixed and bounded lines endures.

In the first section of this chapter I examine participants' articulations of home as a fixed, bounded and settled place. I argue that, for some participants, the expectation of return-as-homecoming (as discussed in the previous chapter) converges with their experience of (re)settlement, reinforcing sedentarist ideas of home. In the second section I consider the ways in which participants place and connect home across multiple locations. I show that, for the majority of participants in my research, home is articulated as a range of meaningful places that are located across overlapping and co-existing spatial scales. Furthermore, I contend that the multiple and complex spatial registers that home assumes are not uniformly understood in a positive way, but also provoke ambiguous and anxious responses from participants. In the final section I suggest that the pluri-local nature of home dislocates foundational accounts of return-as-homecoming, instead indicating that home is actively constructed rather than automatically granted. I show, moreover, that for some participants, actively carving out home across spatially stretched locations serves as a strategy for managing the displacement they experience upon (re)settlement. Despite participants' translocal practices of embedding home across multiple locations, I contend that the desire to fix home in a stable, settled place persists.

6.2 Sedentarist homes: Irreplaceable places and hallowed homes

There is a longstanding tradition in humanistic geography exploring the relationship between people and place (Holloway and Hubbard 2001). Some geographers investigating the person-environment nexus examine the binding ties between people and place, and ask how positive emotional affiliations to place engender an affirmative sense of home (Brown and Perkins 1992; Relph 1976). Tuan's (1974, 1977) well-known phrase 'topophilia' captures people's deeply-felt positive connections with places, while Heidegger's (1971) notion of 'dwelling' expresses a fundamental ontological need of people for a sense of security, safety and continuity in the places they inhabit. In this section I begin the discussion of the 'where' of home for participants in my research. I consider how, for some participants, the ways in which they experience the location of home upon return converges with their expectations of finding a safe, secure, and territorially bounded home. I suggest further that participants' place-attachments to discreetly-defined locations show a degree of elasticity, as where home is reaches beyond the dwelling abode to incorporate both micro- and macro-environments. I show, however, that keeping the analytic distinction between the physical and social domains of home becomes unfeasible in practice, as participants' accounts of 'where' home is located is inseparable from 'who' inhabits it. Following Pollini (2005), I suggest a 'socio-territorial' approach for analysing participants' narratives of home in the post-return context (see Table 6.1). According to Pollini, social relations and territorial attachments are experientially co-present, and must be conceptualized together to account for the complex and overlapping social, subjective, cultural and ecological aspects of home. In this section I demonstrate that, for some participants, home in the post-return context is understood in a highly positive way, whereby its location is relatively static and unchanging, and the social relations therein are understood as authentic and irreplaceable (see Table 6.1). The findings point towards what Jacobs (2004, 172) calls "monogamous modes of dwelling", as participants' (re)settlement experiences suggest re-insertion into what they understand to be their natural habitat of home. This is important because it highlights the real and continued significance of a conception of home as settled, fixed and bounded in place. In spite of some accounts of home that loosen its territorial moorings and see the discreetly-emplaced

home as anachronistic in the modern world, participants' accounts of home in this section suggest that sedentarist understandings of where home is are by no means outmoded.

Table 6.1 Homes in Ireland

Why Ireland is home	Manifestation	Number of responses
'Home as haven'/ Ontological security	Authentic feelings/ rootedness in place	16
'Bricks and mortar'	Grounded in dwelling place	10
Socio-territorial meaning, spatially stretched across places	Reiterates and reinforces sense of security/safety in multi-scaled places	19
Total number of participants who responded:		27

Unsurprisingly, then, when asked to elaborate on what home means to them, a number of participants in my research initially refer to the bricks and mortar of a physical abode. Whether their actual place of residence is a freestanding house, a flat or merely a rented room, respondents refer to some form of physical dwelling unit to define the meaning of home and where it happens to be located. Participants in my research – reiterating the findings of some key studies that show home's meaning to be more than that of a mere physical structure offering shelter (Lam and Yeoh 2004; May 2000) – elaborate on the 'four walls' of home to incorporate more abstract and imaginative understandings.

After describing home in the usual commonsensical way as a semi-detached house located in a Dublin suburb, one participant expands on his original definition to point out that, "It's a difficult question, but a good one. But I'd have to say that home is more to do with the intangibles" (Interview with Dan, 26/11/2007). A number of respondents echo Dan's point, using near-ontological abstractions such as this

participant's statement – "a comfortable place where you feel safe" (Interview with Jennifer, 11/09/2007) – to describe their understandings of home. The preponderance of tropes of 'peacefulness', 'safety', 'security' and 'comfort' running throughout the interview transcripts to describe the meaning of home attests to the strength of the 'home as haven' discourse discussed in Chapter 2. Mary emphatically states that home is

that feeling of peacefulness and security I get. Home is where the heart is. It's where you feel connected, a place you feel you want to stay for the rest of your life (Interview with Mary, 04/09/2007).

In Mary's understanding of home, the bricks and mortar of a dwelling place are by no means disregarded. Nevertheless, it is the more affective bonds with a protected place that are foregrounded in her definition. For participants like Dan and Mary, home is understood as a discreetly located, emotional space where physical and emotional flux are controlled and bounded. This 'home gestalt' suggests a static approach to home and place. The boundaries around home are both spatially and temporally delimited, as home is singularly located and grounded in the present life-projects of those within its 'charmed circle'.

It is important to point out, however, that even in these narrow definitions of home given here, participants slide and slip between different meanings. The feelings of safety and security that participants refer to are intimately connected to and not separable from a physical dwelling place, a material shelter from the elements. Analysis of respondents' ideas of home shows that home is not one thing or the other, but rather that different aspects are enfolded, entwined, overlapping and occurring simultaneously. So for these participants, home is both the bricks and mortar of a house *and* the feelings of ontological security developing therein.

Other participants' idea of an ontologically secure and ordered home display a higher degree of elasticity, as the locations wherein the comfort associated with home are realized stretch to broader geographical scales. As this participant claims,

Home means where I feel grounded. Where I feel in touch with the landscape, the sky, the clouds. The sky is very important to me here. The New York skyline is stunning, but I always felt I was in a movie. Home is the environment, the physical landscape, the sky. I love the colours here, the fabrics. And the artificialness of fabrics and everything in New York used to get on my nerves, and the piped music everywhere. I love New York, it's fabulous, but it's artificial to the core. And I love it for the music and the arts, but here there's textures, colours, and I love the weather, the changes, the moodiness of the weather, and that you can dress up in these clothes, and not be melted out of your skin. It's just there's something else here. I'm more grounded here. It's to do with the landscape, and the water and the air, and you could put me on Mount Eirregal [remote Irish headland] and I'd be quite happy. I just love it. There's something in my bones about that. I mean I had to come into Dun Laoighre, and walking into Dun Laoighre this morning there's a little park up by the Dole office, and it's just magical. Oh, I'd rather be homeless here than there. It's a place I want to visit. But there's something just, I just love the old buildings, the past, the history, I prefer that, there's an anchoring because of the history and the environment, the landscape. I love looking at the past and seeing the history in the landscape. In the States that's all gone because they've imposed a grid system on almost all over the US. There's an annihilation of the history longitudinally, which we haven't completely destroyed yet (Interview with Pauline, 01/11/2007).

For Pauline, the meaning of home is inseparable from its materiality. Similar to those cited above, Pauline defines home as where she feels grounded, as a place of comfort, security and order. Unlike the previously-cited participants, however, she explicitly associates the feeling of centeredness across a broad range of geographical scales. The grounding capacity of home is felt at the macro-environmental level of the Irish landscape (together with its material fabrics, textures, colours, mercurial weather and natural elements), but also at the more micro-environmental scale of a public park and so forth. For Pauline, home is articulated as meaning-laden places,

and results in feelings of anchored authenticity in those significant places. The *genius loci* of these diverse locations imparts a visceral, near-sacred quality, as she experiences a positive sense of historical continuity over time, leading to a deeply emotional attachment to the places she calls home. For Pauline, the ‘authenticity’ of home upon homecoming is accentuated when contrasted with the supposedly ‘inauthentic’ or ersatz nature of the built environment of the United States.

When asked to elaborate on their understandings of home, further analysis of participants’ narratives shows that folded into and overlain with these emotionally charged accounts of spatial, territorial attachments to place are more socio-territorial descriptions. Socio-territorial attachments are the experientially inseparable geographical and social aspects of place. According to Pollini (2005), social relations and territorial attachments cannot be analytically or empirically separate, but must be conceptualised together as socio-territorial attachments that include complex and overlapping social, subjective, cultural and ecological dimensions.

The locational layer of home is defined for the above-cited participants as emotionally-charged territorial attachments to places that vary in geographical scale. For many participants, however, this strong spatial dimension of home easily slips and segues into a social description. In other words, the territorial and social domains of home are experientially inseparable, as ‘where’ home is located and defined is meaningless without ‘who’ occupies those cherished places. As Pollini (2005) defines it, the ‘socio-territorial’ nature of home, in these instances, is about being surrounded by family members (ageing parents, younger and older siblings, nieces, nephews, cousins) and rekindling long-dormant friendships in the familiar environments of the locality. The following response is exemplary of the important position kin and friendship ties take in participants’ socio-territorial definitions of home.

Well, what you must understand is that my father died about a year after I went to America. In a car crash, it was very sudden. So my mother was alone for a long time afterwards. And it’s only me and my brother in the family, and the only reason we stayed out there was because there was

nothing for us here. And she took a big sacrifice to realise that it was much more beneficial for us. But when I came back it was a huge difference to her. See I live a five minute walk around the corner from her. And then I got married, and she's got a whole other family too – my wife's family is quite big. Her sister, who is very close to my mother, said to me in confidence that I'll never know how much it meant to my mother my coming back. It was really a big, big thing, because then I was buying a house, looking for a job, I was doing up the house, she was helping me do up the house, and it was a whole other outlet for her. And for me, I still had a lot of mates I'd been in Trinity with, and coming back and socializing again (Interview with Padraig, 11/11/2007).

For this participant, home is defined by the overlapping socio-territorial dimensions of family and friends in place. Spatial proximity to family members and loved-ones – 'a five minute walk around the corner' – creates the requisite feelings of safety and security for the socio-territorial definition of home.

In a number of instances, a socio-territorial understanding of home expands beyond the immediate locales of family and friends to include wider face-to-face interactions with people in the surrounding environs. As this participant states,

It's about my relationship with my partner, my family being around, my social life, the *craic*, ya know? I was walking through the ward earlier and I was talking to this auld fellow – he must have been near ninety – and he was going on about Rakestown. "Do you know where is Rakestown?" he was saying to me, and I had no idea where it was, but I really enjoyed chatting with this fellow. It was priceless the ones he was coming out with, an auld Dubliner. The *craic*, ya know? Apparently Ringsend used to be called Rakestown. These characters that you meet are priceless (Interview with Willie, 4/11/2007).

It is noteworthy that a number of participants mention the phrase 'the *craic*' when discussing the quality of their social relations. *Craic*, the Gaelic term for fun, is understood as a quintessentially Irish form of fun. It revolves around "witty

conversation, banter and repartee, laughing at life, drowning sorrows . . .” (Inglis 2008, 4-5). This is significant, as it draws attention to the important fact that Willie’s understanding of home as a safe place, surrounded by family, friends and wider face-to-face interactions with people does not occur in a spatial vacuum. *Craic* is understood by participants as only occurring authentically through social relations in Ireland. By explicitly describing their sense of home as relating to the supposedly non-transferable, inimitable quality of Irish social relations - the *craic* - upon return, participants inflect their understandings of home with highly specific socio-territorial contours. Drawing on a discourse of an allegedly territorially-based culture that is untranslatable outside the boundaries of home, participants underscore the issue that when describing home, its geographical and social meanings combine and make them inseparable.

Taking this socio-territorial definition of home in even more specific and complex directions, the following participants explicitly point out the entwined social, spatial, cultural, temporal and ecological aspects that go into the idea of home.

It’s great having contact with and seeing my parents regularly. And the rest of my family. It’s nice to come back and have a sense of where you’re from. I can go down home and see all the relatives, and all that stuff. People know you from when you were a child. Whereas in the States people kind of go and recreate themselves around the country. So here you kind of have this sense of longevity, and I suppose ... ultimately, coming *from* somewhere. Where you are well known, and being part of a family. To be back in that. I think there is much more appreciation of the past here. Whereas in the States it’s constantly looking forward. Even after 10 years away I still feel part of that place. I think you are always where you come from. You know that expression we have, ‘You can take the Irish man out of the bog, but you can’t take the bog out of the Irish man’ (Interview with Joseph, 21/12/2007).

Well, I still refer to home as where I originally grew up. And I think people do that, don’t they? Certainly in an Irish context, they refer to the

‘home-place’. My father and my mother would refer to where they grew up when they go down there as ‘going down to the home place’. So there is that kind of sense of where you were originally from. And I suppose the American concept of home is where you create it. So home kind of moves with you, wherever you set up with your accommodation, or your family. So home moves with you, wherever you are comfortable within your own parameters. So I would still always think of where I grew up as ‘home’. But in the States they believe you are from where you are currently (Interview with Anne, 21/01/2008).

Well, I suppose what you make of home differs depending on your set-up. Like, single, young people, if they are aspirational, they will move, and they will get used to that. Couples, especially if they have children, will stay in one place, not to uproot the children, and see them through the educational cycle. But Americans are really very mobile. Everyone you meet there seems to be originally from somewhere else. But if they are living in New York, then they are New Yorkers, that’s it. Whereas in Ireland a Kerry man will always be a Kerryman, or a Dub will always be a Dub, won’t they? It’s a bit like the baseball teams. They are these franchises, and one week the Seattle Broncos might be the Philadelphia Broncos the next. Now, could you imagine a GAA club doing that? (Interview with Noel, 08/10/2007).

These participants are mindful of the feelings of comfort and security that go into the making of home. Nevertheless, at the same time they inflect its meaning with highly place-specific social relations and cultural activities. Participants like Joseph, Patrick and Noel are inexorably drawn to the different kinds of fixed locations of their upbringing, their ancestral home. Patrick mentions what he perceives to be the particularly Irish attachment to the ‘home-place’ of one’s childhood as evidence of a place-based, territorially-defined understanding of home. This supposedly widely-held Irish characteristic of strong place-attachment is contrasted with what participants perceive as the more deterritorialized practices of home-making in the United States. The example of a GAA club uprooting from its original parish is used

to contrast Irish and American understandings of home. GAA clubs in Ireland are not movable franchises, but are firmly rooted in the communities and places from which they originate (Cronin 1999). Moving to a larger scale than that of the original homestead and the parish clubhouse, participants cite loyalty to the locality in the shape of one's county of origin as equally unchanging. For these participants, home is understood as a simultaneous patchwork of social relations (family, neighbours, friends), cultural activities (Irish sports), commitment to varying spatial locations (homestead, locale and county of origin), together with a sense of temporal continuity connecting past, present and future.

The analysis of 'where' home is presented here is important because it shows that, for some participants, the expectation of return-as-homecoming, as re-insertion into a familiar, bounded home, converges with their experience of (re)settlement. I suggest further that, for some participants, the ontological security and order of such grounded homes is not simply defined within the perimeters of a dwelling abode, but expands outwards to implicate a range of locations at varying geographical stretch. This spatial elasticity of home, however, is inseparable from its social dimension. In other words, for the participants discussed in this section, home assumes a 'socio-territorial' definition, as the 'where' of place-attachments are implicated with the question of 'who' inhabits them. Furthermore, it is important to reiterate that participants' accounts of home in this section reflect a highly positive engagement with the socio-territorial domains of home upon return. Other research suggests that length of residence and long association with a particular place are the determining factors in fostering strong socio-territorial affiliations (Brown and Perkins 1992; Relph 1976). Despite the fact that they have spent many years of their adult lives in the United States, participants in this section articulate a situated sense of 'insideness' that is not based on uninterrupted presence in the ancestral home. Their enduring affiliations to what they perceive as the irreplaceable places and inimitable characters populating the landscape of home are not eroded or sundered by long time-periods away. Their bonds with kin and the wider community located across urban, suburban, small-town and rural environments resurface immediately upon homecoming. Irrespective of their lengthy sojourn in the United States, their connection with the ancestral place upon homecoming remains intact.

6.3 Multiple homes, multiple places

The previous section outlined how sedentarist ideas of people and place remain a resilient feature of participants' understanding of 'where' home is located. In this section I examine participants' attachments to multiple locations in their accounts of home. I argue that numerous respondents display co-existing emotional place-attachments to more than one home, as they actively connect locations across a range of geographical scales. Much recent scholarly work elucidates how people construct and maintain home through a multiplicity of complex spatialities that reflect a more expansive range of locations (Gustafson 2001, 2008; Nowicka 2007; Rojek and Urry 1997; Urry 2000). While a large body of literature stresses the difficulties that mobile people experience in maintaining strong territorial bonds with place (Auge 1995; Buttimer 1980; Casey 1993; Lomsky-Feder and Rapoport 2003), other studies demonstrate how mobility and territorial attachments are not mutually exclusive (Ahmed et al. 2003; Fortier 1999, 2001; Gurney 2003; Hannerz 1996). Given this complexity and diversity of contemporary forms of mobility and habitation, many authors rethink home and migration as interdependent and entwined. Following Massey's (1994) notion of a 'progressive sense of place', Jacobs (2004, 167-8) suggests that "settling is not simply about coming to terms with one new place, but about many places." This conceptualization is important, as it recognizes that home is not located simply by the opposition of places 'here' and 'there', but involves the explicit recognition of the "multiple scales we negotiate to gather to us that which is familiar" (Jacobs 2004, 165). Jacobs' notion of a 'sutured' geography of dwelling across a range of linked localities is particularly useful for analyzing participants' accounts of their multi-located homes. In this section I argue, moreover, that while home may be successfully sutured and connected across various locations, at the same time the pluri-local nature of home upon return arouses a host of anxieties for many participants (see Table 6.2). In other words, the multi-located home is not only experienced in a positive way as feeling 'in place' both 'here' and 'there', but also generates feelings of being 'out of place' both 'here' and 'there'. Elaborating on Jacobs' metaphor of the connections between various places, in this section I suggest that, at times, some of the 'stitches' that suture homes 'here' and 'there' become unfastened. In other words, as participants emplace home in multiple locations, at the

same time it is important to remain attentive to the displacement that can accompany the spatial stretching of home.

Table 6.2 Multiple homes in multiple places

Location of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Multiple homes 'here' and 'there'	Positive experience of 'in place' both 'here' and 'there'	16
	Ambivalent feelings 'out of place' 'here' and 'there'	9
Global abode – 'at home in the world'	Affirmative expression of being 'located' everywhere	1
Total number of participants who responded:		22

A dominant narrative, then, emerging from respondents' discussion of home is a sense of the connections between places, of forging ties astride locations 'here' and 'there'. For a majority of participants in my research, maintaining contacts across the Atlantic with family, friends, politics, sports and other cultural pursuit through frequent travel to the United States becomes an integral part of an everyday, pluri-situated life.

I think my home is here now, but I also feel at home when I am in Rochester. Because I was in New York for so long I am very familiar with the place. I have friends there, I have family there, I have my two daughters there. I go visit them as often as I can. So, now the family home is still there, the two kids still live there with their mum. So I feel at home in New York. Because I know the place so well, I feel comfortable when I go back to New York (Interview with Willie, 4/11/2007).

I go over to Boston every year, sometimes even twice a year, and still have a lot of friends over there and keep in touch with the Boston newspapers and the sport, and I used to be heavily involved in student politics there and keep up on that, so I still view it as a second home, and if I ever had to I would have no hesitation of going back there (Interview with Andy, 22/01/2008).

Nowicka's (2006, 2007) research on United Nations professionals, who lead highly mobile lifestyles, shows how this international elite experiences difficulty in locating and describing their homes within a standard geographical lexicon. In other words, the experience of home across a range of places simultaneously spanning several scales leads Nowicka's (2006, 2007) informants to run up against the limits of language. Similarly, participants like Willie and Andy falter in finding the right words when locating home in geographical terms. As they successfully suture home into various places, the orthodox nomenclature for elucidating location fails to capture the complex spatialities that home assumes. Both Willie and Andy describe home as an elastic and spatially stretched notion, located at multiple sites and scales. Rather than a singular place of fixed, bounded affiliations, for Willie and Andy, home is emergent at different times and geographical scales. Place-affiliation is not necessarily lost or weakened by the act of relocation. In fact, mobility from one home to another has countervailing consequences, as new homes replace old ones, without eclipsing former places of habitation as important dimensions of home. The intersections of home and memory, together with the lived experience of a sense of home not divorced from various forms of mobility, leads to a fluent, successful suturing of both old and new homes 'here' and 'there'. Through a combination of continuing social relations, cultural activities and attachments to multiple locales ranging in scale from family dwellings to neighbourhoods, cities and countries, a plural sense of home reinforces feelings of connection, comfort and ease of comportment in *both* the United States and the Republic of Ireland. A precise vocabulary to convey this confident straddling of multiple locations as part of the meaning of home may not exist yet. Nevertheless, this does not detract from the strength of the sentiment.

This is not the whole story, however. Recognition of the changing and multiple contours of home's location upon return are not experienced exclusively in positive ways. Participants may successfully reconcile the far-flung and the locally-lived places that define home. At the same time, as Nicole Constable (1999, 224) suggest, "a plural vision can be both alienating and inspiring, a source of awareness and dissatisfaction, and a source of pleasure and apprehension." For a number of participants in my research, articulating a pluri-located understanding of home is simultaneously accompanied by a sense of division, confusion and anxiety over the nature of home upon return. As one participant puts it,

I've spent most of my adult life, my working life in the United States. For a long time I would have considered home to be in Ireland. For a period before I came back, I said if it's not Ireland, it would be in Oregon. Oregon, I would have considered home for a while. I always remember when I'd been away on a trip, and how great a feeling it was to fly into Portland, cause it felt like home. And it still does in many ways, and I visit the States regularly as well. I've still got a sister out there . . . but now . . . I'd probably go down to my folks, there is still a strong draw towards my parents' place . . . but I live in Dublin. But I don't consider it home. It's almost like it was when I was in New York. I mean I lived in New York, it's not home. Since I came back it's been a transition . . . I don't really know where I'm going to end up . . . (Interview with Cormac, 10/01/2008).

This participant is mindful of his robust retention of strong emotional attachments to his familial home where his parents still live. At the same time, he is aware that he felt the experience of being 'at home' in the past in a number of different places. Home for this participant is not bound to or delimited by the stable points of identification of the homestead. Instead, its meaning travels across different times, places and scales, as memories of former homes collide and overlap with his current home. However, the feeling of being transitory – another past experience – resurfaces in his present situation to create an ambivalent feeling about 'where' home is located. The ways in which Cormac locates home upon return display many of the

ties and affiliations familiar to transnational migrants. Rather than a comfortable and flexible bridging of home's disparate locations, however, there is a slippage and fragmentation of home's many places upon homecoming for Cormac. This has a bearing on his adaptive responses in the post-return context, as the locational dimension of home becomes destabilized and uncertain.

Other participants express a similar loosening of ties and feelings of contradiction towards various places as a result of migration (often multiple) and return. These respondents are even more explicit on the changing and complex contours of home's location in the context of return.

I heard someone say once in America, 'Home is where you hang your hat.' I would agree with that. It is wherever your hat lands . . . like I was going to say home is where you are anchored, but that is like when we were in America people would regard home as being in Ireland, but I found when the 9/11 attacks happened, you felt like some place special was being attacked. But . . . home . . . I suppose home is where you are happy. Some people would say their native place is your home, but your native place is your native place, it doesn't change. But if you go to Timbuktu and you set-up house there, and you are happy, and make friends there, that's home for that period of time. Coming back as we've done makes you see things differently as well (Interview with Harry, 02/02/2008).

There was kind of a honeymoon period for a while when I came back initially. I remember going around thinking, "God, it's great to be back. What the hell was I doing over there all this time when I could have been here in Ireland." And like that place in dreary Galway where we grew up is home, and it is great to go back there. But that wears off soon enough as well, I tell you. And you wake up one morning and realize that you're actually homesick for the States. And then you start thinking that you might be better off back there. So you are ringing all your friends in New York and asking about things there and letting it drag on your connection

with them there. It's kind of like a relationship that has ended, but you're still seeing each other. . . . But it is a real Catch 22. I mean, I've one foot in the bed, and one foot hanging out, for fear that I'd commit myself too much (Interview with Jennifer 09/09/2007).

These participants' multi-located homes are tempered by the recognition that return migration can erode ties to particular local environs, while at the same time enhancing affiliation to homes located elsewhere. Harry's hesitant account of where home is located for him is particularly suggestive of the various manifestations that territorial attachments may take. He initially agrees with the proverb about home being where one hangs their hat in order to stress the practical nature of home as a geographical location where one currently inhabits. He then acknowledges the allure that a person's 'native place' can hold in determining the location of home. He goes on to suggest, however, that the 'anchoring' power of such primordial places in determining where one calls home is mitigated by the recognition that other places may become surrogate homes. The terrorist attacks on New York City in September 2001, where he lived for over a decade, profoundly distressed and affected his sense of home. Nevertheless, Harry further defines home by unhinging it entirely from one's ancestral origins, and suggests that home is any place where one finds the elusive state of human happiness. Harry's elaborate and ambiguous account of home's location displays the influence of past, present and projected homes in defining the complexities of territorial attachments in the transnational era. Jennifer displays a similarly complex spatial relationship with home. Despite her ongoing attachments to the ancestral home, after a brief 'honeymoon period' Jennifer ambivalently acknowledges that she might prefer living in the United States, and is aware that she may now feel more *at home* away from home. She compares her lingering connections with the United States to an intimate relationship that has finished, but where both partners continue to feel deeply connected to one another. For Jennifer, the multiplicity of homes fractures any stable and continuous sense of home, as she vacillates between (re)settlement in the Republic of Ireland and re-emigration to the United States.

The analysis of participants' narratives of the location of home elucidates the "divergent configurations of placement, or being 'at home'" (Ahmed et al. 2003, 1) that return migration can elicit. Unlike the strongly sedentarist accounts of home presented in the previous section, participants' narratives in this section show that home may also contain a "plurality of experiences, histories and constituencies" (Ahmed et al. 2003, 2). Furthermore, in contrast to the unanimously optimistic accounts of home in the previous section, participants' attempts to define their place-affiliations in this section highlights "the ways in which home disappoints, aggravates, neglects, confines and contradicts as much as it inspires and comforts us" (Moore 2000, 212). This ambivalent placing of home is particularly evident among those participants who fail to fully suture their multiple place-affiliations both 'here' and 'there' into a coherent sense of home. In effect, participants' narratives of where home is located in this section highlight two important and related issues. First, home may be multiply located as an affirmative appraisal of places both 'here' and 'there'. Second, (re)settlement may elicit a sense of slippage and displacement between both diasporic and original homes, as the effort of negotiating home across places 'here' and 'there' means that home is never fully located neither 'here' nor 'there'.

6.4 Making home places

In the previous section I considered how, for many participants, no single place fits their criteria for defining where home is located. In this section I suggest that participants' decentred contouring of home destabilizes foundational accounts of home as the ultimate place of origin/resting place, and instead leads to awareness of the need to create and carve out home upon homecoming. Instead of assuming that home is a site of pre-eminent importance in peoples' lives, some recent academic work asks how home comes to be such a significance space (Butcher 2010; Nowicka 2006, 2007; Jacobs and Smith 2008; Kelleher 2000; Walsh 2006a; Wiles 2008; Winstanley et al. 2002; Yeoh and Huang 2000). Rather than solely addressing the series of subjective feelings associated with home, this research also examines home as a verb, investigating how reiterated daily routines, embodied rituals, portable practices and material cultures constitute a sense of home (Germann-Molz 2008; Graham and Khosravi 1997). Building on the analysis of home discussed in the

previous section, I show that the fluid and fluctuating spatial character of home for participants unsettles their expectations of return-as-homecoming, and indicates a more active and ongoing process of emplacing home in the post-return context (see Table 6.3). Furthermore, in this section I contend that recognizing the demand to make home upon return does not necessarily override participants' longing to fix home in a discreet, secure place. Participants' active construction of home across multiple places is, in many instances, a coping strategy designed to manage the displacement that often accompanies (re)settlement (see Table 6.3). In other words, while participants make and live home translocally, the longing to erect and reaffirm the boundaries around a territorially-defined home is ever-present. This highlights the tension between the lived and longed-for meanings of home: as participants' establish and maintain dual orientations to homes 'here' and 'there', they simultaneously strive for a grounded, singularly located home.

Table 6.3 Making home

How home is made	Manifestation	Number of responses
Need to make/carve out home in material places of home	Grounded feelings of emplacement in spaces of home	14
	Displaces original home as origins/foundational location of home	9
	Stretch home across diverse scales and locations; strive to ground it in discreet place	11
Total number of participants who responded:		14

For many participants in this research, attempting to (re)settle in the post-return context leads to the awareness that home cannot simply be taken-for-granted as one's 'native place' or 'original' home, but must instead be made (see Table 6.3). The

following quotations express a sentiment shared by a number of participants in my research.

When you come back home you are not prepared to find it feeling like you are moving to a new place. Like, I mean, I followed current affairs when I was in the States, I read Irish literature, watched the handful of films we make, like everyone else I had a million memories of what the place was like, all that, but coming back is, well, I mean, you have to really work at it. I mean, I thought I would kind of settle in very fast, and I am an adaptable kind of person, but I just found myself really struggling to make a go of things here (Interview with Winnifred, 13/02/2008).

It dawned on us I suppose once we were back that we would need to make some effort to get along here. I remember my son the first day I took him into the school. And he says to me, “Daddy, I thought we were going to a school, not a church.” You know, the Catholic church still runs all the schools here, and they have all the religious images up on the walls. That was right at the beginning when we arrived back, and it struck me vividly. Like, Danny’s [his son] observation was saying to me that you might have been born here and grown up here, but you are not used to things here and are going to have to learn the ropes here (Interview with Harry, 02/02/2008).

Before I came back I never thought I’d have to make such adjustments to get on with things here. I, and maybe it’s just because I never thought about it, but when you’re away you think Dublin is home, but then you get back and realise that it’s just another place like everywhere else, where people have all the same bullshit, the same insecurities, and you have to struggle to get on with things (Interview with Stella, 23/01/2008).

Awareness of the need to actively engage in home-making may not be a feature of home exclusive to return migrants. However, the above-cited participants’ narratives of (re)settlement suggest that return migration heightens awareness of the issue that

home must be made. Winnifred is explicit that homecoming elicits an unanticipated sense of arrival in what feels like a new destination, and that if the return move is to be a successful one, she will have to ‘really work at it’. Harry’s account of return ‘brings home’ to him that the familiarity associated with that place called home is by no means assured in the post-return context. Return destabilizes the static location of home as a place of origin for him, and instead involves a deliberative learning of the emplaced customs and mores of home. For Stella, return demystifies any lingering nostalgia surrounding the idea of home as an anxiety-free place. Instead, homecoming is a leavetaking from foundational accounts of home; as home becomes reprocessed in the post-return context as the place where one happens to make it. Participants like Winnifred, Harry and Stella all cite a lack of preparedness for the adjustments required to (re)settle upon return. The expectation of return-as-homecoming is so influential that many participants are simply unaware of the effort required to become re-established upon return; and their subsequent struggle to ground a sense of home in the post-return context repudiates the idea of homecoming to a foundational place.

Acknowledging that the (re)settlement experience disrupts their expectations of return to a settled, bounded home, a number of participants are keen to elaborate on the material, mundane activities that go into the making and locating of home. Many participants are mindful of the (often laborious) processes involved in making home. Their elaboration of the everyday material acts that create a sense of being in place suggest that if they ceased juggling all the elements involved in the construction of home, then the connective tissue between home’s various elements would disintegrate. As Jacobs and Smith (2008) define it, the ‘emotional-cum-material’ work needed to establish and maintain home at various places requires the continuous carrying out of remarkably mundane and material procedures. The following quotations detail the prosaic practices integral to the making and active emplacing of home.

We’ve made our home here, me and my wife and my two little girls. . . . I guess we must just have been very lucky, but the security is there because we have the home at home, and we have some close friends, and

if there is a problem at school I think we are supported and Siobhan [his daughter] has her music school and her basketball lessons, and we got a good deal on the gym membership, which has a swimming pool and all those sorts of things. So home is safe, even if it is in a not-very-nice suburb, but we have our own little niche here now (Interview with Tony, 08/09/2007).

I think we've had to put a lot of effort into establishing ourselves here. Cause when we came back everybody just seemed to be doing their own thing. And we moved to Rathmines where we didn't really know anyone. But I guess over the last while we've got more friendly with people at work, and we can make some connections through the kids at school and various family functions which we turn up to every now and again. And we've put a lot of money into doing up the house. It was a total kip when we moved in. It belonged to some old lady and it smelled of cats and the fittings were like they were from the 18th century. But we've invested massively in the house now, and it feels more like home now (Interview with Winnifred, 29/01/2008).

We came back with boxes and boxes of things. Just so much stuff you wouldn't believe. We had to hire a moving company to ship over a container-full of our stuff. And we didn't really settle in until we got all that stuff. Until then it was a bit like living out of a suitcase – very uncomfortable. Once we got our things, the girls with all their toys and stuff, then we were fit to get on with things (Interview with Alan, 22/02/2008).

These participants echo the importance of proximity to family and friends in the definition of home. However, through the experience of migration they are conscious that home is not automatic – it needs to be actively organized and constructed. Home is about consciously carving out a personal 'niche' where one feels comfortable, as well as where there is suitable and affordable access to wider place-based infrastructural (airports) and consumption- and service-related concerns (schools,

shopping centres, gymnasiums). The cross-current of forces that constitute home on a daily basis – feelings of comfort in a dwelling place, ease of comportment with, and access to, numerous and variously scaled services, as well as social relations with family, friends and those in the wider neighbourhood – all take time to establish and must be worked at continuously. Furthermore, the ‘rematerializing’ of home does not alight simply on the bricks and mortar of the dwelling unit, but involves an appreciation of how “people’s relationships with ‘things’ are as important for sociological inquiry as are their links to other people” (Jacobs and Smith 2008, 517). Alan’s accounts shows that home is clearly not a de-territorialized, spatially emancipated place, but involves establishing and maintaining emotional and functional relationships to both people and things.

While participants like Tony, Winnifred and Alan look locally for solutions to the surprise of having to actively make home upon homecoming, other participants’ adaptive response to feelings of displacement upon return is to create home translocally – to stretch and make home across and between distinct locations.

The way things are with me kind of unsettles things. Like I mightn’t invest as much as I could in friends or a job because I know that I can head-off again if the shit hits the fan – and you know, I have all these contacts still in New York, and I get over most summers and stay in friends’ apartments, and just love it. Like, you know yourself, you meet someone and they ask you, “So where are you from?” Like it kind of frustrates me that question – it leaves me flustered. I start qualifying it, and modifying it, and generally making an arse of myself. “Well, I was born in Dublin . . . but I spend a lot of time here, and some more time there.” You know, and it makes you ask yourself, Am I from here, from Dublin? You know, at the end of the day, it must be just so much more straightforward to just know where you’re from. . . . The guy who’s grown up in his village, and married his sweetheart, and got the steady job at whatever, and plays football for the local team – I’m envious of that (Interview with Dan, 26/11/2007)

I kind of juggle the two places. I mean, a lot of my family are still in the States. They come and visit us here, we go and visit them there. I'm always in touch with things there. Like, we probably expected to hit the ground running when we came back here, but then we found that we didn't exactly. . . . Don't get me wrong, like we are putting down roots here. We are certainly more used to the set-up here now. But Boston is another outlet for us, we don't want to lose touch there either. So we keep that connection alive. Of course I'd love to be able to put them all in one place, not to have the hassle of having to phone up friends rather than go and actually see them, and remember kids' birthdays or travel thousands of miles to go to a wedding or whatever. It would be great if I could have them all over here, but barring me winning the lottery, well . . . (Interview with Kate, 25/11/2007).

Undeniably, micro-scale affiliations to proximate objects, locales, family and friends are an immediate point of reference for these participants' understanding of where home is. Nevertheless, participants like Dan and Kate sufficiently rework such local attachments to incorporate the pluri-local ties that continue to contour their place-based understandings of home. Their ongoing enthrallment to and active retention of ties to former places of habitation in the United States serves as a strategy to manage the discomfiting experience of not finding the expected homecoming they imagined. In effect, their accounts of home's location highlight a disjuncture between the lived and the longed-for experience of home. While home is lived as real connections between places both in the United States and the Republic of Ireland, Dan and Kate long to fix home in a discreet, singular location. Dan maintains a sense of home both in Dublin and New York, while wishing to pin-down where home is in a fixed, unchanging place. Likewise, Kate nurtures attachments to her current and former homes, but aspires to 'put them all in one place'. For the likes of Dan and Kate, homecoming destabilizes a notion of return-as-homecoming, leaving them sceptical of finding a lasting location to definitively call home. And yet, the longing to anchor home singly in place is ever-present.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter examined the ways in which participants' ideas of home are localized in spatial terms upon homecoming. I began with a discussion of participants' place-based understandings of home. I showed that rooting and grounding home exclusively in an irreplaceable 'original home' remains an important way of understanding the concept for a number of participants, and perpetuates sedentarist ideas of people-place relationships.

For such participants, the expectations surrounding homecoming to a stable, settled home converges with their (re)settlement experience. Alongside the territorially-defined practices that create feelings of familiarity and comfort of comportment in a singularly located place, a number of participants articulate an understanding of home in less place-specific terms. Many participants problematize the notion that their 'native place' coincides with 'where' they locate home, leading them to articulate more multiple and mobile senses of home. Some participants successfully suture and connect various places both 'here' and 'there' to foster pluri-local place-attachments. For others, however, the spatial stretching of home upon (re)settlement fractures their sense of where home is, creating ambivalent feelings of being 'out of place' both 'here' and 'there'. Uprooting home from one's place of origin unsettles foundational accounts of return-as-homecoming, leading many participants to the recognition that home must be *made* upon (re)settlement. Through their embodied routines and iterated daily practices that connect a range of locations, I showed that participants actively carve out home upon return. Moreover, embedding home in multiple places through translocal acts and practices is a way of mitigating the displacement that the (re)settlement experience elicits for many participants. I argued further that participants' lived experience of connecting home to both far-flung and nearby places is not a "pastoral stability, free of the dissonance between place and desire" (Mufti and Shohat 1997, 1), as the longing to tie home to a firmly fastened place persists.

The analysis presented in this chapter offers an empirical elaboration of the co-presence of both fixed and fluid elements at the heart of home. As discussed in

Chapters 1 and 2, some recent approaches to the study of home marginalize the grounded and sedentary aspects of home in favour of its more mobile and flexible features. Participants' elucidation of home's dimension of location in this chapter puts centre stage the simultaneity of stable and shifting meanings of home. Their (re)settlement experiences suggest that they concurrently uproot and reground home across various locations. Participants' narratives begin to undo binaries separating dynamic and static notions of home, as they live life translocally, yet yearn to fix it in a singular place.

I build on this argument further in the next chapter. I show that identification emerges as the second dominant dimension that participants consistently refer to in their discussions of what home means. The following chapter develops the argument presented here by showing that many of the qualities of home that participants elucidate in terms of location manifest themselves in relation to their self-identities upon homecoming. Alongside location, identification emerges as a keyword in participants' narratives of home, and their attempts to make sense of who they are upon return reflects crucial characteristics of home as discussed throughout this thesis.

Chapter 7 Home as identification

7.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the second of Blunt and Varley's (2004) dimensions of home, to explore its association with identification. Home's dimensions of location and identification interweave and share overlapping characteristics. The distinction between participants' empirical descriptions of place-attachments to home and place-identities is, at times, difficult to discern. This highlights the similarities between the domains of location and identification in participants' understandings of home. That said, the analysis of home that I present in this chapter differs from Chapter 6 by focussing on how participants' subjectivities and who they understand themselves to be upon (re)settlement influences their ideas of home. It is also worth reiterating here that the conceptualization of identity that I use in this chapter focuses solely on the individual side of identification. It is well established across several social science disciplines that identification is not exclusively a matter of people's own expressions of selfhood. Rather, identification also involves a social side insofar as who people understand themselves to be is umbilically related to who others understand them as being. For the purposes of this analysis, however, in this chapter I focus on participants' subjective expressions of identification with home. In Chapter 8 I move the discussion forward to examine the social side of identification with home, but do so from a conceptual perspective using a vocabulary of belonging.

So, despite this interrelationship between the home's different dimensions, in this chapter I show that participants' accounts of 'who I am' in relation to 'where I am' (Christou 2006a) advances the argument of Chapter 6 that sedentarist and mobile moments simultaneously inflect the meaning of home. In this chapter I argue that participants' identity narratives break the congruity between a fixed identity and a singular home, as multiple axes of identification shape their sense of home. Nevertheless, despite harbouring flexible, changing and often-conflicting selves, I contend that at the same time participants continue to cling to a conception of home and identity as stable and integrated. This is significant because, even as participants exhort compound and processual identifications with home, there remains a need, following Butcher (2010, 24), "to rethink just how fluid home actually is."

Beginning this examination of the ways in which a “sense of self, of one’s identity, corresponds to various conceptualizations of home” (Al-Ali and Khoser 2002, 7), in the first section of this chapter I analyze how, for a few participants, a singular, fixed identity does, in fact, fit neatly into a static definition of home upon homecoming. For a majority of participants, however, finding a secure sense of self upon homecoming is overlain with a more complicated account of the (re)settlement experience, as return problematizes essentialized expressions of identity in relation to home. This is the focus on the second section. In such instances, homecoming destabilizes participants’ expectations of finding a secure identification with home in the post-return context and unsettles foundational stories of home as the source of some core self. In the final section I show that participants indicate complex and variegated models of identification that highlights how home is at once dynamic and static in nature. This leads participants to articulate composite, shifting and hybrid identifications with multiple homes. This is a vital aspect of how participants understanding home. That said, identification does not only play out as a “processual, active term, derived from a verb” (Brubaker 2004, 41), but at the same time suggests to participants “the possibility of being anchored . . . to strive for a certain identity . . . stemming from the fact that he/she is not yet what he/she wants to become” (Krzyzanowski and Wodak 2007, 99). This highlights the tension between the intertwined qualities of home as both mobile and static: lived as protean, fluid and fluctuating, but longed-for as stable, settled and bounded. I suggest that this is most evident in participants’ unexpected accounts of identification with home as returned migrants.

7.2 Home as a mirror of the self: Home as identity, identity as home

In this section I examine participants’ narratives of the ways in which bounded and secure meanings of home influence their stories of fixed, stable and authentic identities. My analysis of participants’ identity narratives in this section suggests that binding ties between home and identification remain unfrayed in some instances. One strand of the academic literature on home examines how peoples’ expressions of self-identity correspond to and mirror their ideas of home (Dupuis and Thorns 1998; Easthope 2004; Fox 2006; Rowles and Chaudhury 2005; Cooper Marcus 1995). In

this section I argue that, for some participants, homecoming plays a pivotal role in their identity narratives. This involves showing that accounts of being ‘really me’ in the post-return context rely on an oppositional model of identity and home that contrasts an ‘authentic’ self as realized only at home against an ‘inauthentic’ self as evident in diaspora (see Table 7.1). This robust link between an immutable notion of home and a fixed, ‘authentic’ identity highlights the ongoing hold that a static, bounded notion of home has over some participants’ accounts of identity. Much recent scholarship sees the search for self in the contemporary era as ‘beyond identity’ (Brubaker and Cooper 2000) and the desire for home as anachronistic (as well as reactionary, in some cases) in a world in movement (Rapport and Dawson 1998). The narrative accounts of home and identity that I present in this section – as participants strive to fix the meaning of home to a secure identity – suggest that such a move is premature. These findings contrast with other scholarship that suggests that contemporary identity stems from fluid, fractured and ‘moving stories’ (Rapport and Dawson 1998).

Table 7.1 Home as a mirror of self

Definition of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Fixed identification with home	Authentic feelings of core self	15
National identity, home as homeland	Reaffirms sense of who one is where one is	7
Total number of participants who responded:		18

A number of participants in this research draw on a discourse of home and identity as a desire to anchor a sense of self in their homeland. Understanding the notion of home as offering a form of ontological security in a fast-changing world, some

respondents articulate a sense of self- and social-identity as relatively fixed, ascribed and immutable. When asked to discuss the ‘who I am’ in the ‘where I am’, one participant draws an uncomplicated isomorphism between her sense of self and her feeling of home. As she says, “I just feel more myself here” (Interview with Siobhan, 20/09/07). Other participants elaborate on the binding ties between home and identity, elucidating the specific contours of the connections between ‘here’ and their sense of self. As the following excerpts from the interview transcripts show, some participants equate their self-identities with Irish cultural traditions that are rooted across a range of scales in the territorially-defined place of the homeland.

I think being in touch with your roots is so important in life. Like, we were brought up in Navan, and I like being close to that. Irish culture like, trad [traditional] music and I just love the summers when the [GAA] Championship is running. I just strongly identify with all those things (Interview with Andy, 22/01/2008).

Well, I was born and reared in the Arran Islands, and for me speaking Irish is still very important. So it’s great being about to speak in Irish again. I suppose that’s a large part of my identity, the language, *an teanga* as we say (Interview with Diarmuid, 15/05/2007).

There’s nothing like walking into Croke Park on a Sunday in the summer if you’re team is in the All Ireland. There’s a real feeling of . . . Oh I don’t know how you’d put it, maybe say you just feel you are part of that, and that it is a very important part of who you are. You see, me and my brother we were brought up in the countryside, and sure we had nothing to do but run around the fields playing hurling everyday. So I do feel a real spark has been ignited in me now that I can participate in that again, and get my own kids involved of course (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

These participants stress strong points of identification that – while slipping and sliding between a range of sites from the micro-scale of the nuclear family to the macro-scale of the nation – are firmly rooted in the country of origin. Andy discusses

the importance of proximity to his ‘roots’ and family in the county of his upbringing as an important factor in his self-identity, while also mentioning spectatorship at traditional Irish music events and indigenous Irish sporting contests as significant markers of identification upon return home. For Diarmuid, the ability to return to his island home and speak in his mother tongue, where landscape and language overlap, is important in reinforcing a sense of self. Dylan cherishes what he perceives to be a hallowed site of Irish cultural memory – Croke Park, the headquarters of Gaelic games in Ireland – and attests to the importance a sense of historical continuity by seeing his children participate in Gaelic cultural practices. Understanding what they perceive to be distinctive and inimitable markers of Irishness – Irish sports, language, landscapes, music and so on – these participants stress a model of identification with home that emphasizes the importance of non-transferable and non-translatable cultural characteristics and practices in constituting a sense of self. Returning to a former way of life through the places, practices and pastimes of their youth, respondents’ identities are heavily implicated with stories about what they understand to be important markers of home’s socio-cultural makeup.

Further analysis of participants’ narratives shows that folded into and overlain with these emotionally charged accounts of identity and home is an understanding of identity as national identity, of home as homeland. The stretching of the imaginative and abstract aspects of home and identity to the scale of the nation is a common theme emerging from participants’ narratives, as identity is frequently articulated in terms of national identity, and home is customarily understood as homeland. When asked to discuss her identity in relation to home, one participant inadvertently draws attention to the connections between the entwined and related notions of home and homeland by asking, “What do you mean? Home as home, or home as Ireland?” (Interview with Maureen, 8/12/2007). Other participants elaborate on this dual aspect of identity in relation to home.

I suppose having a feeling of being at home here is very nice. Like loads of little things I’ve mentioned before like just having things in common to say to people at the watercooler in the morning, as they say. And cultural things that make you feel part of the place, like getting the

football results coming in at five o' clock on a Saturday, and I guess just feeling Irish again. . . . quality things you wouldn't have elsewhere (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

Well, maybe I didn't realise it until I returned, but I'm a real Dub at heart, I'm very Irish I think. Like I love to be chatty, and it might be superficial the way we just chat away with every Tom, Dick and Harry, but you don't have that in America. Like I just love the banter and the ribbing here. And as well walking around the city since I came back, now there certainly are some eyesores gone up, but it's great to be able to walk around the Phoenix Park, and stroll down O' Connell Street, and even the Spire, it's kind of grown on me (Interview with Willie, 4/11/2007).

Numerous studies of identity recognise the frequent slippages between individual and social expressions of identification on both a personal and collective level, as well as the intertwining of home and homeland in relation to questions of identity (Lam and Yeoh 2004; MacPhearson 2000; Malkki 1992). One strand of research on identity looks at the implicit ways in which national identity is articulated and experienced at a more everyday, 'banal' level (Anderson 1991; Billig 1995). Greg Noble (2002, 54) traces the variegated ways in which "homes articulate domestic spaces to national experience." In his research on suburban Sydney, Noble finds that widely accepted symbols of Australian national identity function to make people feel 'at home' on the intimate scale of the family, community or region. At the same time, such representations of Australianness serve to make people feel 'at home' in a larger social space of the nation. Echoing the findings of Noble's research, participants such as Dylan cite stereotypical national characteristics and signifiers of Irishness as creating a feeling of being 'at home'. For Dylan, the alleged ease of Irish sociability and 'loads of little things' creates an everyday sense of connection to home and engenders a robust sense of 'feeling Irish again'. Willie likewise attests to a feeling of comfort upon return home, stressing a strong regional identity as a Dubliner, which segues seamlessly and becomes synonymous with a national identity as Irish. The banal banter of everyday interaction, together with the capital's

symbolic streets and their monuments to the mythic script of the national narrative, constitute both a personal and national identification with home upon return for Willie.

A number of participants who extol the virtues of a centred, bounded and coherent self- and social-identity upon homecoming do so by contrasting their current subject position with what they perceive as their unmoored, ersatz and 'inauthentic' identity while in the United States.

In the States I was just so lost I think. . . . I just didn't really have a clue what I wanted to do or where I was going. And I felt I couldn't get into anything there. I was just floating from job to job and flat to flat. . . . But no sooner was I home and I felt right back into the swing of things again. Much more at home with myself. And I think I just started enjoying being Irish again (Interview with Bríd, 09/09/2007).

I think I had culture shock at a certain point, I think it had to do with where I lived, I mean the East Village was very intense. Started doing some drugs, partied a lot. Just completely lost my identity. My parents sort of showed up to rescue me out of the blue then. . . . And I never settled there. I was always transient (Interview with Peter, 22/02/2008).

When you come home you feel much more at ease. You are not constantly saying, 'Oh, am I saying the right word?' You are not constantly thinking on your guard. You are more at ease, where you feel more natural, where you feel you fit in. And you don't have to pretend to be something else, you can just be yourself. And you are not looked on as an alien, you are looked on just the same as everybody else. I think Ireland is much better insofar as there are more common things. . . . There's much more shared experience here. In America there's nothing like that. America is just so big, so vast (Interview with Padraig, 11/11/2007).

The above-cited participants narrate their identities as lost in diaspora, but regained upon returning home. They construct a binary model of identity, whereby self- and social-identity are inflexibly tied to the notion of home as their original home, while their experiences in diaspora are discredited as unimportant and of little consequence to who they are. It may well be the case that these participants downplay the significance of their migration experiences in order to retrospectively justify their decision to return to the Republic of Ireland. Nevertheless, the oppositional framework for thinking through the relationship between home and identity that participants such as Peter, Padraig and Bríd articulate is not to be dismissed. For a number of participants, narrating an ‘authentic’ sense of themselves as strongly linked to return migration depends on constructing (in hindsight or otherwise) the diasporic experience as ‘inauthentic’. Bríd and Peter emphasize that in diaspora they were in ‘transition’, ‘all over the shop’, ‘floating’ and ‘lost’, but once they returned to the Republic of Ireland, they got ‘right back into the swing of things’. Padraig explicitly addresses what he understands to be the fraudulent nature of his time in the United States, lamenting the necessity to ‘pretend’ to be someone he clearly was not. In contrast, upon homecoming, he feels more ‘natural’ in a place where one can ‘just be yourself’. These participants draw on a narrative of identity as firmly located in place, as one’s natural habitat or element whereby the search for an authentic sense of self is closely associated with returning home (Malkki 1992). ‘Losing’ one’s sense of self and/or Irishness in diaspora and ‘finding’ oneself again in the ancestral homeland are two aspects of the same script for these participants, whereby the articulation of identity is coterminous with home.

The analysis presented here underscores the continued attachment that some participants display to a notion of identity as exclusively related to a discreetly defined home. The participants quoted in this section show little hesitation in identifying with a stable, fixed home. Their narratives of who they understand themselves to be are inseparable from where they happen to be. Their sense of self is firmly bound to being ‘at home’; while a loss or disruption to self ensues upon removal from the place they understand as home.

7.3 Destabilizing home: The dilemma of identity

In the previous section I highlighted the continued relevance that fixed identifications with home play in participants' narratives of homecoming. In this section I show that unitary notions of identity upon (re)settlement do not tell the whole story. Here I examine participants' accounts of the ways in which homecoming serves as a catalyst to destabilize their identifications with home. I show that, while there is frequently an expectation of finding a secure identification with home upon return, the realities of return leads many participants to problematize the notion of homecoming as the foundational ground of identity. Much recent scholarship examines how the intimate links between a secure sense of self and being 'at home' in a particular place are undermined when home is destroyed, taken away and/or altered (Black and Khoser 1999; Black 2002; Fox 2006; Gurney 1997, 2003; Long and Oxfeld 2004; May 1996, 2000; Porteous and Smith 2001). Migration scholarship has long examined the negative implications that migration may have for people's sense of themselves. Numerous studies of migrant communities investigate the spatial, temporal, symbolic and social disorientation that may accompany relocation from one home to another, in many instances leading to a fragmentation of identity (Mitchell 1997; Pratt 1999; Pries 1999; Sargent and Larchanche-Kim 2006; Vertovec 2001). In this section I argue that alongside and overlaying respondents' stories of the role that a bounded notion of home plays in expressing and buttressing a robust identity is a parallel narrative of feelings of rupture and/or loss of identity in the post-return context. The co-existence of ardent expressions of identification *and* the decentring of identity away from home in participants' narratives of homecoming muddies a model of the original home as the foundational source of identity (see Table 7.2). The analysis foregrounds the dilemma that many participants face upon return when trying to figure out who they are in relation to where they are.

Table 7.2 Destabilizing home, disrupting identity

Definition of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Home as foundational ground of identity	Crisis/fracture of identification with home	7
	Disrupts expectation of finding a secure, bounded identification with home	10
Total number of participants who responded:		15

For some respondents, the challenges to their sense of self upon return are a catalyst for what they describe in dramatic terms as an unanticipated sense of exasperation or ‘crisis’. The following participants’ accounts articulate the acute confusion and anxiety that can often accompany the homecoming.

I was losing the plot a bit when I came home. I mean, it’s a question of, What do you do? You really begin to question yourself. You don’t know what’s your status, really, because you are back home after years away, and you’re back in this place that you know well but that’s also changed in the meantime, changed without you. And it can be a real quandary (Interview with Fiona, 17/10/2007)

I just think it’s an emigrant experience. I think it’s a case of, “What do you do when you come home? What do you do with your past?” I mean one thing that struck me when I came home was these guys [people who remained in Ireland] had all gone for pints every Friday night for the last nine years, and nine years is not that long, but it literally felt like a lifetime for me, and I felt like I had seen and done everything, and life had just gone on for them. So you end up talking about your experiences a lot, to those who’ll listen, trying I think to integrate it into your life somehow. But I often feel a great sense of crisis, and I think that is not

that unusual . . . Like, you often think to yourself, What the fuck am I doing here? (Interview with Fintan, 22/01/2008).

The homecoming leads participants such as Fiona and Fintan to the recognition that they cannot articulate a coherent life narrative. Catarine Kinnvall (2004a, 2004b) argues that a strong self-identity consists in the development of a consistent feeling of biographical continuity whereby the individual is able to sustain a narrative about the self and generally tell a convincing story (to themselves and others) of who they are, where they have been, and where they may be going. However, maintaining such a narrative – especially under conditions of increasing globalisation, transnational migration and cultural hybridization (Bauman 2001; Castles and Davidson 2000) – is not easy, and disruptions to the story challenge one's sense of self-identity, often leading to an acute feeling of 'existential anxiety' (Kinnvall 2004a, 2004b). Upon returning home, the above-cited respondents find it difficult to square their migratory episode with an overall consistent life-course narrative. Fiona, unsure of her 'status' in the Republic of Ireland, 'loses the plot' somewhat upon return and experiences her old-new environment as a 'quandary' of sorts. Fintan contrasts what he assumes to be the coherent life narratives of Irish-born people who did not emigrate from the Republic of Ireland – for whom 'life had just gone on' – with his own experience of leaving, then returning. He struggles to 'integrate' his emigrant experience, his 'past', with his current position, and admits to often feeling bereft of a stable sense of self upon homecoming. These respondents' pasts feel irreconcilable with their present situation, and the perceived interruption to their personal biographies upon return leads them to articulate an unstable identification with home in the post-return context.

Other participants' response to the dilemma that marks their vexed and contentious identifications with home upon (re)settlement is to interrogate foundational accounts of home as the ground of identity.

Coming back to Galway after New York, my God! For somebody who likes the theatre and the arts there is only the festival in the summer here, other than that there is very little going on, only the pubs. . . . I was into a

different scene. New York is a very open-minded liberal place. . . . Here people are still very small-minded, narrow-minded. And I find that very difficult. It's not that I want to say that about Ireland, but it's true. The small-mindedness, I can't stand it. And some people get very upset about that – and I do sometimes myself – because they have their own little creative way of thinking and they just want to be themselves. . . . Like I just don't identify with that parochial mindset. It's maddening really, trying to figure out who you want to be, because you are Irish, like you have this idea that you want to come home, but now that I'm back, I mean, some things are just too much to take, in a way. You kind of say to yourself, Is this really me? (Interview with Elizabeth, 29/01/2008).

Coming back is a real culture shock in ways, which is a surprise. . . . I'm finding it tough living in the countryside here in Ireland. It's all hurling and inbred things like that. Here in Currandullagh the whole GAA prejudice is setting in. One mother told me recently that she was pure delighted because the GAA coach had called her son by his first name for the first time, and I said, "Fuck that." If your identity is purely to do with how good you are at GAA, no way! And the religion! I have given him the choice, but MacDarragh [her son] decided he wants to read Harry Potter instead. . . . Like you sometimes wonder whether they've heard of the separation of Church and State here yet. . . . I mean, when I was in New York I remember you would meet people and you would always identify as Irish. Like it's great to be seen as Irish in the States. Now, I wasn't necessarily hanging out in Irish bars and all that, but you would certainly let people know that you were Irish, and you would be quite forthright about that. But I mean, coming back, I wonder why I bothered . . . like, yes, I'm Irish, I was born here, but I don't really get it anymore (Interview with Jennifer, 11/09/2007).

Participants in the previous section (Section 7.2) valorise the sense of personal and historical continuity that contact with Irish cultural traditions and heritage gives them. Respondents such as Elizabeth and Jennifer, however, are left somewhat

flummoxed by what they perceive as the glacial pace of social change in the Republic of Ireland. For Elizabeth, there is a sharp contrast between what she understands to be the cosmopolitan and tolerant inhabitants of New York City, and the 'parochial' attitudes of Irish people in the Republic of Ireland. A positive identification with home is compromised for Elizabeth by the constraints that she perceives to be placed upon her 'creative way of thinking'. Aware of the greater opportunities for self-expression in New York City, Elizabeth articulates a dis-identification with various aspects home, leading her to describe the process of identification with home upon return as 'maddening'. Likewise, Jennifer expresses a sense of frustration upon encountering the institutionalized channels of identity formation in Irish society. She is incredulous that many people continue to affirm their identity by measuring it against how successfully they (or their children) comply with dominant forms of socialization in Irish society. As an adaptive response to the unfamiliarity they meet upon (re)settlement, both Elizabeth and Jennifer distance themselves from what they expected to identify with. For Elizabeth, confronting this unexpected reality of homecoming throws into question her identification with the Republic of Ireland as a source of her identity, while for Jennifer the 'culture shock' that return elicits leads her to partially disavow her identity as Irish.

Comparing participants' motivations behind the decision to return (discussed in Chapter 5) against their identity narratives in this section shows that the expectations surrounding the return move are often unmet by the reality of (re)settlement. In other words, the expectation and the experience of home often diverge. While a notion of home as coterminous with identity accompanies many participants' expectations of homecoming, in a number of instances the return conditions create a disjuncture between participants' ideas of home and their sense of self. I argued that participants in the previous section articulate a sense of identity as found or rediscovered upon re-insertion into their former way of life at home. For participants in this section, however, their situation upon return confronts them with a dilemma over identifying with home. It is clear that homecoming may fray and/or sever the ties that bind people to place, identity to home. The homecoming is in many instances imagined as a therapeutic step in fixing the meaning of home and identity. Participants'

comments reflect the distress that return may evoke, highlighting the upheaval to participants' foundational accounts of home as the source of their identity.

7.4 Hybrid homes, identity work and marginal returnee identities

In this section I examine how the co-constitutive link between home and identity is inflected with an understanding of identification as a fluid, continually negotiated construct. Much recent scholarship examines migrants' identities not as reified, essentialised or static, but rather as syncretic, composed of heterogeneous ethno- and cross-cultural influences (Anthias 2001; Bagnoli 2007; Bhabha 1994; Dwyer 2003; Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Calgar 1997; Hall 1987, 1995; Salih 2000; Yau 2007). In this section I show that a majority of participants articulate a complex model of identification with home that reveals the composite contouring of identity in relation to home. I suggest that participants display hybrid identifications with more than one home. This composite contouring of home and identity, however, is not only understood as, in Salman Rushdie's (Quoted in Dwyer 2003, 188) words, "a love-song to our mongrel selves", but also generates ambiguous, conflicting and equivocal subject positions as participants negotiate their multilayered identities. I contend that one major implication of holding such hybrid identifications with home upon (re)settlement is that participants self-consciously embrace a shifting, dynamic model of identity as in process, as an ongoing construction. This is important, as it disrupts a static notion of home as the ultimate ground of identity, and instead underscores the unfolding, active and fluctuating elements of identity formation. I argue that a further consequence of conceptualizing the relationship between identity and home in changing and processual terms is that participants unexpectedly identify themselves as return migrants upon homecoming. This unanticipated self-identification as a returnee demonstrates how, even as participants negotiate marginal-mainstream subject positions in relation to multiple homes, the longing to harmonize home and identity is ever-present (See Table 7.3).

Table 7.3 Hybrid homes, identity work

Definition of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Hybrid homes – fluid identifications with homes ‘here’ and ‘there’	Experienced as positive identification with syncretic homes	19
	Experienced as ambivalent, anxiety-inducing liminality	9
Dynamic, emergent and pluralized identification with homes ‘here’ and ‘there’	Need to active ‘do identity’ upon (re)settlement	13
	Unexpectedly identify with home as ‘return migrants’	8
Total number of participants who responded:		25

Stuart Hall (1992, 7) suggests that migrants’ identities are “irrevocably translated. . . . They must learn to inhabit at least two identities, to speak two cultural languages, to translate and negotiate between them.” For a number of participants in this research, their identity narratives show that rather than ‘finding’ an ‘authentic’ identification with home upon return or else ‘losing’ their sense of self in the post-return context, their identity narratives display a more nuanced, multiple and complex model of identification. As one participant simply states, “Like I didn’t start off as an Irish person here [upon return], I started off as an American-Irish person” (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2007). The following respondents elaborate on their dual identities, as they manage the ‘translation’ from the United States to the Republic of Ireland in an affirmative manner. In their hybrid status, they understand themselves as successfully managing to juggle differing cultural repertoires.

Coming back I was like an American guy. And I still am in many ways. I remember I was working in one place, and I couldn’t believe the slagging

that goes on at work, and America is very politically correct, and Boston even more Puritan, and I was all like, “Oh my God, you can’t say that!” And I sometimes think it is so vicious here, the humour, and that’s from living in a place like the States. And then of course I had a very strong American accent and I spoke the way American’s spoke, kind of loud and slow and deliberate. And I still use all these American phrases, like “I’ll touch base with you on that,” or “I took a little inside heat.” All these phrases from baseball. So I think because we have all these clients from all over the world, they often put me on the phone with them, because I know how to deal with fellows from different places. Like in the States you are dealing with so many cultures, and if you say one thing out of place you’re fired. So having that American influence has been a real plus for me (Interview with Dan, 26/11/2007).

It’s nice coming back because you’ve had all these experiences in the States of integration and feeling like an outsider and all that, and then you integrate, and you do your thing. But then you decide you want to come back, so you’ve got to deal with the re-integration bit, but I’ve found it interesting because I think being away like that gives you this perspective on the place, so you can kind of see things that others who’re pure steeped in the place and have never been away might not. So I think that’s a real positive (Interview with Johanna, 10/10/2007).

Living in the States, it gives you such confidence in yourself. You see, Americans are so outgoing and just positive-minded about everything. If they got cancer, they’d be just, “OK, I’ve got cancer. Now what am I going to do to get over this?” Whereas Irish people would be down in the dumps, worried sick. So when I came back here I had to totally reinvent myself, because the hedge-funds business I was involved in was not really developed over here at the time, so I had to try to make good use of what I did know – and kind of stay quiet about the rest (Interview with Olive, 16/02/2008).

The above-cited respondents articulate in a celebratory way their ‘mongrel selves’, as they understanding themselves to successfully straddle the spaces of both ‘home’ and ‘away’. They are able to affirm the creative potential of their dual positioning and cultural competence in multiple homes, as they ‘reinvent’ their hybrid selves to fit their changed situations. For a large number of participants in my research, their continued use of American phrases, the wearing of American-style apparel, and so on, leads to an affirmative identification of the syncretic sources of their self-identities upon return. As a consequence of their adoption of American cultural characteristics, these participants are hesitant to identify exclusively with what they see as the parochialism of a dyed-in-the-wool ‘Irish-Irish’ identity, and instead articulate a hybrid identity that is equally at home on Main Street in Mullingar as it is in Midtown Manhattan.

While participants may lionize the heterogeneous sources of their identity and their hybrid senses of home, for some, compound identifications with home can also be laced with traces of loss, alienation and ambiguity. The following participants’ accounts capture the habitual hazards of hybridity upon homecoming.

Well, it’s kind of a double-edged sword. It’s fantastic being home because I have contact with my family again . . . And I do sometimes feel really comfortable here. But the worst thing about being back, I find it boring. I really find it boring, because New York is so visually stimulating. There are so many people there, so many different kinds of people, there is just so much going on all the time. But for someone who likes that kind of diversity, I found that very much missing from Ireland. And then of course I think I always identified with Ireland when I was in New York, and now that I’m home I strongly identify with New York. A real far-away hills type (Interview with Elaine 17/11/2007).

I think the thing that emigrating as I did . . . what it does is it makes you realise that you can go. That you are able to up sticks and find your little niche somewhere else. I suppose people who’ve never been away would have a fear, like I wouldn’t really. But then the other side is that, well,

sometimes I feel like I've a split personality. Like you want to live here and you want to live there. . . . So you're humming and hawing about it, and in a way you never settle then. You become a grass-is-always-greener person – and that's no good. . . . And it's when you come back that you realise this, because once you're back you have that niggling feeling about coming home out of your system, and you know that you've the wherewithal to head off again (Interview with Joseph, 21/12/2007).

Some participants successfully graft and transplant their syncretic sense of self to home, confidently articulating the translated nature of their hybrid identifications with home. Others, however, describe their compound identities upon return as losing something in translation. The use of equivocal phrases such as 'double-edged sword', 'split personality', 'humming and hawing', 'grass-is-always-greener person', and so on, attests to a gestalt of confusion that leaves some participants' identifications oscillating awkwardly between home and diaspora. For participants like Elaine and Joseph, there is a halting hesitancy to translate fully between the differing cultural practices of the United States and the Republic of Ireland. Instead, their 'mongrel' selves place in abeyance a coherent and integrated identification with various homes. These ambiguous identifications with both localized and far-flung homes in the post-return context suggests a sense of 'in-betweenness' and 'liminality' (Lawson 1999). Even though they have returned to the place that is nominally 'where they are from', the dilemma of 'who they are' continues. Elaine realises that being at 'home' is unexciting in comparison with her diasporic life, and she only understands the full extent of her identification with what she perceives as New York's cosmopolitanism upon return. Destabilised by his realization that he holds multiple homes, multiple identities, Joseph's account of his 'split personality' is catalysed by the actual return move. For these participants, rather than simply enthusing over the cosmopolitan credentials of their hybrid identities, the homecoming heightens awareness of their interstitiality, of the limbo-like state that identifications with multiple homes engenders upon return. As one participant sums up her situation, "I feel like I'm on hold since I'm back. I don't know whether I'm coming or going" (Interview with Kate, 25/11/2007).

The participants cited in this section so far show that hybrid identifications with multiple homes may facilitate and/or frustrate the (re)settlement experience. Whatever way this hybridity plays out, further analysis of the interview transcripts demonstrates that, in many instances, such multiple subject positionings suggests to participants that they must actively ‘do identity’ (Christou 2006a) upon (re)settlement. In other words, participants recognize that negotiating complex identities reveals the tenuousness of essentialized accounts of home as the fundamental ground of identity, and instead suggests a shifting, dynamic model of identity as in process, as an ongoing construction. As the following quotations illustrate, identifying with home is a process of ‘identity-making’, temporarily settling on “unstable points of identification or suture” (Hall 1992, 11), and is subject to change as people’s positioning in relation to various places and social configurations changes.

Like you did feel a bit maladjusted, as they say, coming back. . . . I remember having this discussion shortly after I arrived here about coming and going to America, a person said to me, “Once you go you never come back”, as in once you go you don’t come back the same person. And I genuinely believe that. You know, when you come back you are not the same person, obviously. But I think even if you were here for forty years after returning, you settle and you get on with life, but you are not the same (Interview with Martin, 04/02/2008).

You can’t just pack people in boxes and bring them back. For me it’s a culture shock coming back, an absolute culture shock. You can’t just switch off, and say, now I belong to an Irish society because I’m Irish and I should be here because I’m illegal [in America]. No. You grow up in a culture . . . and you adjust and it takes quite a few years to adjust and you finally do. . . . But I’m still finding my feet here, and it will take time. I’m under no illusions. But it is hard (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2007).

Coming back it does make you question who you are. Like I mean you don't go away for the best part of your working adult life, and then just resume business as usual. It's more a case of changing to fit the occasion. Like coming back you have to change the way you talk, the way you dress – you can't be wearing chinos and a reversed baseball cap here (Interview with Dan, 26/11/2007).

For a number of participants in my research, accounting for their sense of self upon return home underscores the ways in which expressions of identity are subject to change according to differing spatial, relational and temporal contexts. Martin attests to a feeling of displacement upon return, and is aware that the experience of migration has changed his sense of himself – that he has not 'come back the same person' – but that through a process of resilience and adjustment he has learned to manage his conflicting selves and 'get on with life'. Maureen highlights the issue that identity cannot be treated as a container concept. Instead, identity is marked by fluidity and adaptation to particular sets of social relations and locations – a point reiterated by Dan's situational definition of his chameleon-like identity. These participants understand their sense of self as a process of 'identity-making', whereby self-definitions are far from unconditional or ascribed conditions. They are acutely aware that identity must be self-consciously carved out upon (re)settlement, and with the passage of time, the reworking of their self-definitions will in all likelihood change, yet again. For participants like Martin, Maureen and Dan, homecoming is discomfiting, as it reveals the shifting ground of identity, and inscribes movement between different positions and roles into the heart of their understandings of home. Their narratives unsettle a putatively authentic link between a core self and a singular home, as the process of identification is exposed as a complex act of negotiating often-competing positions.

For a number of participants holding an active, processual conception of personal identity formation, perhaps the most surprising and unexpected facet to emerge from their sense of self upon (re)settlement is identification with home as a 'return migrant'. Numerous participants have an expectation of finding a secure sense of self upon (re)settlement, assuming that their understandings of who they are will fit

neatly with homecoming. The following excerpts, however, highlight the unanticipated self-transformations that emerge upon return: namely, identification with home as a 'return migrant'.

You might think because you were born here that you just find your feet straight away. But that's not the case in my experience. And I have friends who would agree with me on this. You don't just come back and go, Right, here I am. No, the pieces don't just fall into place automatically because you went to school here, or whatever. And I think that is an experience of my generation. Like, of the 25 in my class in school, 70 per cent would have emigrated. But now most of them are back – and we have this peculiar experience we share of being back, and figuring out what it is exactly we are doing here (Interview with Maria, 22/10/2007).

You do sort of come to an awareness of yourself as having lived a very different life from your schoolmates who stayed in Dublin when you get back and realize that the way you see things is not necessarily the way people here see it. Don't get me wrong now, it's great being back, but I'm aware too that I'm not indifferent, that I was away from here for so long, and your development is different from Mickey and Paddy and Sinead and Mairead and whoever decided that staying was the best thing to do. And that sort of caught me by surprise, if I'm honest. . . . But it's a strange thing as well, because I've a number of friends who are also back, and it's like a little club, you know, the whole talk is about being back and how to deal with that (Interview with Tony, 08/09/2007).

I do have this feeling of being a returned emigrant. And when I saw your ad in the paper I was glad that somebody was doing something on this. Because you go away, and then you come back, and there seems to be very little heard about that experience (Interview with Patrick, 08/01/2008).

For participants such as Maria, Tony, and Patrick, identification with home is understood as distinct from the identity formation of the mainstream, non-migratory Irish population. Their life trajectories, experiences and expectations as return migrants are understood as qualitatively different from those of their peers who did not emigrate from Ireland. These participants assume that they will identify with the wider norms and expectations of the majority population. Upon return, however, they find themselves articulating a particular identification with home as a returnee. This has consequences for their sense of themselves, which they understand as both setting them apart from the mainstream sedentary population, as well as engendering a sense of solidarity with other return migrants. For these participants, it is return migration that foregrounds the crosscurrent of vectors that compose their identifications with home, as a dissonance emerges between their self-definitions in diaspora and upon homecoming. Participants' positioning in relation to various homes does not seamlessly segue from place to place, as their self-identities shift from that of emigrant to return migrant.

This sense of social distance from mainstream norms and mannerisms that identification with home as a return migrant elicits is not always experienced in a positive way by participants. Identifying as a return migrant upon (re)settlement differentiates participants from what they perceive to be dominant identity patterns of the majority Irish population. Nevertheless, at the same time this emergent returnee identity is felt to be marginalized.

Like, I was a New Yorker in many ways when I came back, as well as being that same Irish fellow I always was. And I found it tough I'd say to get over that. . . . So the question is: What are you when you come back? Are you the Joe you were in New York or are you the Joe everyone in Dublin knows? So that's what I'd say people like me who come back is all about. We're a bit slow I think to realize that we are a bit of both. I mean, I had to come to terms with being back. I manage OK, but the difficult bit is seeing yourself as different. I mean, it's not very nice to feel that you don't really connect with people here. Like because in a way I did my growing-up in the States, like all my twenties, part of my

thirties . . . but there is this feeling of missing out on something. I mean, I'm back now, but there is a sense that you are that little bit different. And like, I look at my brother, just as an example, but he is really part of the community here. I mean, he's involved in the soccer club, the youth teams, I walk round the estate with him and everyone stops to talk to him. And I'm just standing there feeling like I'm playing gooseberry, as they say, not really getting the whole thing. Sometimes I wish, you know, just to be able to get on with things and yap away like my brother (Interview with Joe, 20/12/2007).

It can be tough to try and explain yourself sometimes. I mean, coming back changes you. Like, you know, all the habits I had in the States don't just disappear over night. I mean, it takes time, you hold on to those memories and who you thought yourself to be. And I have some great memories from the States. And if you come back, then you're trying to establish yourself at home, and you do, but only by changing. I mean, you can't just walk around thinking of yourself as you did in the States, you have to get along with the way people do things here. So you need some subtle adjustments. I mean, I'm glad enough to be back, but I couldn't say it's 100 per cent I'll be here forever. I mean, the way I see it: it's 50-50. Like I'd love to say that I see myself being here forever – but the fact I came back, and I mean, sometimes you just feel like a complete stranger to things here. . . You know, it's really strange, just feeling on the edge of things. Now, I'm not stupid, I mean I have been away . . . what, 17 years, but still . . . (Interview with Stella, 23/01/2008).

The above-cited participants display an appreciation of the multiple levels at which the relationship between identity and home is played out. Joe demonstrates that the relationship between home and identity is not a zero-sum. Upon return, he discovers that he is still the 'same' person in many ways. That said, at the same time he cannot 'get over' his former life in the United States. He finds it difficult to articulate together his New York identity and his Dublin identity, and attempts to reach a compromise by transforming who he understands himself to be. Joe is aware of the

traumatic adjustment required upon homecoming in order to fashion a feasible sense of who he is. Joe ‘manages’ his multiple identifications with more than one home, but, nevertheless, feels peripheral to certain aspects of mainstream identifications with home. This outsider status as a returnee means he is, at times, ‘playing gooseberry’ between dominant members of Irish society, as he longs to move from the margin to what he perceives as mainstream identity markers.

Similarly, Stella refigures the relationship between her old and new home, her old and new selves, in an effort to accommodate her altered situation in the context of return. Amid the transformations that follow, Stella reaches a temporary compromise with who she is, with where she is. However, even though she is ‘glad enough’ with her return situation, identification with home for Stella is not stable on the horizon, as the possibility of future homes elsewhere intrude on the present. Her emergent awareness as a peripheralized returnee means that memories of former homes influence identity formation, destabilizing the relationship between her original home and her sense of self. Aware of her shifting identity positions as she accommodates herself to changing contexts, Stella disrupts the notion of her original home as the foundational source of identity, even as she wishes she could ‘see myself staying here forever’. The narratives of Joe and Stella are important because they show that, even as emergent, shifting and pluralized identifications with home are actively negotiated, the longing to fix identity to home is ever-present and overlays their ‘identity work’.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter has analysed participants’ identities in relation to home. I began the chapter with a discussion of participants’ expressions of identity in terms of a fixed conception of home. I showed that, for some participants, the evocation of strong points of identification with territorially non-transferable traditions and culture in the Republic of Ireland constitutes a firm binding between self and home. I then discussed those participants’ narratives of identity expressed through the loss of home. In many instances the (re)settlement experience appears to disrupt expectations of finding an authentic or core self upon homecoming. The majority of

participants resist binary frameworks that entrap identification with home as either 'here' or 'there'. A number of participants' narratives connect points of identification in both the United States and the Republic of Ireland, underscoring the issue that their self-identity successfully straddles cultures and translates between traditions.

Such hybridity, however, is not only experienced in a positive way. As participants confidently link and bridge complex identifications with multiple homes, return also elicits an awkward, limbo-like subject positioning where they feel themselves neither fully 'here' nor 'there'. One important consequence of such hybrid identities is that participants display an appreciation of the ways in which they must 'do identity' (Christou 2006a) upon (re)settlement. This leads participants to an awareness that conceiving of the homecoming as the end of their migration journey is filled with uncertainties. Instead, what emerges from their narrative accounts of home is that particular identities emerge in relation to specific spatialities, and that the return move reveals identity as transformed upon (re)settlement. The (re)settlement experience involves negotiation around complex and often-conflicting identities, thus showing that the relationship between home and identity is neither fixed nor stable. Rather than homecoming signalling the end of the search for self, as the final arrival, what emerges from this interrogation of home as the source of identity is an unanticipated identification with home as a 'return migrant'. Participants' identifications with home as returnees awkwardly positions them somewhere on the margins *and* in the mainstream. This has negative implications for participants' sense of themselves, for even as they are mindful that a complete identification with home cannot be recaptured, they still cling to a conception of home and identity as harmonized.

Emergent, pluralized and shifting registers of identification with home do not snuff out the striving for an established, singular and fixed identity. This is perhaps most evident in participants' accounts of feeling somewhat sidelined as return migrants upon (re)settlement. I demonstrated that participants transform the 'who I am' in the 'where I am' upon return to take account of both their composite sense of self and their continued retention of a desire for an integrated identity. The analysis presented in this chapter deepens the argument put forward in Chapter 6 about home's

topographic locations, and reiterates the broader contention of the thesis that home is at once a fluid and static concept. Participants' positioning somewhere between indigenous and diasporic subjects, however, begins to suggest that identification is not exclusively a matter of individual imagination, but also relates to how others define one as included/excluded within the boundaries of home. This stresses the social over the subjective side of home, and points towards questions of who belongs to home, and who does not. The issue of belonging is the focus of the final empirical chapter of this thesis, to which my analysis now turns.

Chapter 8 Home as belonging

8.1 Introduction

So far the analysis of participants' narratives focuses exclusively on their own subjective accounts of how they understand home in the post-return context. In this chapter the analysis shifts from the subjective to the social side of home. By this I mean that the ways in which people make sense of home is not merely a matter of individual idiosyncrasy or private preference, but is also about how others publicly categorize or label them as part of home or not. In this chapter I address home's public profile by examining its third dominant dimension of belonging. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, home's dimension of belonging is in many ways synonymous with certain aspects of home's dimensions of location and identification. The ways in which people experience home as a feeling of belonging 'at home', often 'fitting in' to multiple homes, reiterates and shares many characteristics with the domains of location and identification, as discussed in the Chapters 6 and 7. The social on of belonging, however, is distinct from those of location and identification insofar as it explicitly draws attention to the intersubjective elements involved in defining home.

In this chapter, then, I argue that part of the meaning of home has to do with the ways in which dominant sectors of Irish society categorize returnees as belonging to home or not upon return. Following Feldman (2008), I define the dominant sectors in Irish society as members of the native-born majority white, sedentary, Catholic population. In the first section of this chapter I show that participants' articulations of home are influenced by mainstream Irish society's labelling of them in various ways. Participants' accounts of their interactions with the majority Irish population suggest two polarized discursive axes around which return migrants in Irish society are positioned as belonging to home. On the one hand, participants understand themselves to be categorized by mainstream society as the 'same' as them, and therefore seen as unproblematically belonging upon return. On the other hand, participants understand themselves to be categorized by mainstream society as 'different' from them, and therefore seen as not-quite-belonging upon return. These discursive constructions of return migrants' 'sameness' and 'difference' impinges on participants in different ways. For some participants, being framed by dominant

others as the same as them positively reinforces feelings of affiliation and expectations of ‘fitting in’ upon homecoming. For others, the majority Irish population’s normative expectation that returnees comport themselves in ways similar to them produces an overwhelming pressure to conform to received patterns of ‘fitting in’, and therefore involves suppressing expressions of difference. Some participants struggle to meet others’ normative expectations that they be the same as the majority population. In such instances, some participants attest to feeling set off as different, and therefore as not-quite belonging to home.

Participants, however, are not trapped by the ways in which dominant others normatively position them as belonging upon return. In the second section of this chapter I consider how some participants grapple with the normative expectation that they should ‘fit in’ upon homecoming by challenging some of the terms on which belonging is devised by dominant sectors of Irish society. While accommodating the normative demands to behave the same as the majority population, I show how some participants simultaneously place demands of their own on the dominant culture to recognize and respect alternate claims of belonging. Through their active engagement with mainstream Irish society, I suggest that some participants begin to budge the normative boundaries around which dominant Irish society erects belonging, and work to achieve a model of belonging as defined by more progressive and inclusive terms. This suggests that the longing that belonging entails starts to lose some of its imaginary and yearned-for features, and instead assumes an actual outline. Furthermore, participants’ assertions of affiliation upon return unsettle dominant accounts of who belongs to home and who does not, exposing the fundamental instability of powerful and established constructs of social membership.

8.2 Ascribing belonging: Constructing sameness and difference

In this section I concentrate on an aspect of belonging that participants persistently raise in their narratives of homecoming: namely, how their articulations of ‘fitting in’ or not upon return are influenced by the ways that the majority Irish population categorize or label return migrants as belonging to home. Recent scholarship recognizes that the question of belonging contains two interrelated dimensions: that

of belonging as individuals' emotional attachments, or self-ascriptions, as well as belonging that is ascribed to or imposed upon certain people by others (Anthias 2001, 2002, 2008; Grunenberg 2005; Hedetoft 2004; Jenkins 2008; Nagel and Staeheli 2008; Yuval-Davis 2006). In this section I show that participants perceive the mainstream Irish population to hold a set of contradictory normative expectations about return migrants to Irish society. On the one hand, participants understand themselves to be constructed by dominant social spheres in Irish society as unproblematically belonging upon homecoming, based on their perceived 'sameness' to the majority Irish population (see Table 8.1). On the other, participants understand themselves to be constructed by mainstream Irish society as not-quite-belonging upon return, based on their perceived 'difference' from the majority Irish population. The discourse of 'sameness' emphasizes a process of incorporation and recruitment of return migrants to the in-group of the majority Irish population. However, the stress on returnees' 'difference' from the majority Irish population highlights a process of boundary maintenance between putatively authentic 'insiders' and allegedly inauthentic 'outsiders'. In this section I argue that these polarized discursive constructions of return migrants in Irish society has an impact on participants' articulations of belonging upon return in a number of ways. For some, being constructed as the same as the sedentary Irish population reinforces positive feelings of inclusion and belonging. For others, the insistence that return migrants are the same as mainstream Irish society perpetuates the expectation that they should belong unproblematically, in some instances resulting in an overwhelming pressure to conform to accepted patterns of belonging. For others still, discovering that the right to belong is predicated on being the same as the majority Irish population results in feelings of non-belonging, as their failure to drop distinctive behaviours and practices marks them out as different – and therefore, as not-quite-belonging.

Table 8.1 Constructing sameness and difference

Definition of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Categorized by dominant others as the 'same' as 'us'	Reinforced feelings of belonging to home, being 'at home'	9
	Produces pressures to conform to normative patterns of 'sameness', of belonging	8
Categorized by dominant others as 'different' from 'us'	Produces feelings of exclusion from home, not-quite-belonging	11
Total number of participants who responded:		21

With the exception of the Habitual Residency Law, which states that a person must be ordinarily resident in the Republic of Ireland to automatically gain access to the full range of citizens' social welfare entitlements, there are no real institutional barriers to belonging for return migrants in Irish society (Gray 2006a). Returnees, along with their offspring, enjoy all the same rights and privileges afforded the non-migratory Irish population (Walter et al. 2002). Return migrants' statutory entitlement to access fully all the state's services percolates to a more everyday level of inclusion and incorporation, as some participants perceive others to unhesitatingly accept them upon return. The following quotation captures the banal-but-potent ways in which the categorizing of return migrants by others as the 'same' as the majority stay-at-home population positively influences some participants' sense of 'fitting in' in the post-return context.

Well, it's great coming back and simply being known. You know, we're a tight-knit community here, and it does make you feel part of something to come back and just be treated the same as everyone else. The great thing about Ireland, you know, when you meets someone you don't

know, and then they ask you if you know so-and-so from Dublin or Longford or Galway, or wherever, and before long, you realise you're second-cousins-twice-removed. I love making those connections. Nothing like that in the States. You know, the States is just unfathomable in ways, it's so big. Here, there's so much stuff in common, and you can really know where you stand with people (Interview with Colm, 13/12/2007).

For participants like Colm, the way the mainstream Irish population labels him as one of the in-group upon return serves to positively reinforce his feelings of affiliation upon homecoming. The effortless manner in which he adjusts to relocating home is facilitated by others' positioning him as the 'same' as the mainstream population. Social interaction with other Irish people in the post-return context validates his sense of 'fitting in' upon homecoming, and what he understands as the relatively monoculturalist makeup of the Republic of Ireland further enhances his sense of proximity to home.

For other participants, however, the ways in which the sedentary Irish population perceives returnees as the 'same' as mainstream Irish society creates its own set of difficulties. The same monoculturalist discourse of an homogeneously composed society that stands as a source of reassurance for Colm's incorporation, for others creates an overwhelming expectation that they must conform to accepted patterns of behaviour. In other words, because of an assumption held by the stay-at-home Irish population (as well as by many return migrants) that return migrants are the 'same' as 'us', many participants feel pressurized into behaving as the 'same' as others during social interaction.

I learned very quickly to keep my mouth shut, just do a job, because people didn't want to know. People come up to you and they'd be welcoming you home, but you couldn't . . . you'd learn very quickly to just say, "Yeah, grand, lovely to be here." Whereas if someone came up to you and really wanted to know, you'd say, "It's a fucking pain in the

arse, coming back to this shithole.” But you can’t say something like that, so you just keep quiet and smile (Interview with Pat, 27/10/2007).

You find with the people who stayed like you’d come back, and people didn’t want to hear one word about what you were doing or what it was like, or if you said one word in an American accent, it was, “Alright, come back, but don’t you dare say one word in an American accent.” So you’re meant to just leave all that behind you and fit in exactly with the way things are here . . . And the other thing with my daughter, if I had people over at the house, you’d nearly be embarrassed if they heard her bawling away in an American accent, because you know what they’d be thinking. “Oh listen to the accent on her.” And you’d be trying to hush her up in case they go taking about the place (Interview with Fintan, 22/01/2008).

When you come back sometimes you just want to keep your head down, and get on with it. ’Cause I find people here don’t want to hear about your life over there, or what your life has been like since being back. So I certainly wouldn’t go around talking about it (Interview with Cormac, 10/01/2008).

The above-cited participants are acutely aware of the normative expectation held by the mainstream Irish population that they should ‘fit in’ to Irish society in an unproblematic and straightforward manner. Popular discursive accounts of immigration and immigrant integration acknowledge that problems may arise in relation to the adjustment and adaptation of non-Irish migratory populations within the Republic of Ireland (Lentin and McVeigh 2002). Issues of alienation and problems with reintegrating into Irish society are not expected to arise for return migrants, however (Gray 2006a, 2006b, Hayward and Howard 2007; Ní Laoire 2008b). In these popular accounts of belonging, then, return migrants are understood as the ‘same’ as the stay-at-home Irish population, thereby belonging to home in an unconditional, uncomplicated way. For some participants, however, these often-aggressive expectations that returnees are the ‘same’ as the mainstream Irish

population leads to a style of interaction that overemphasises sameness and consensus, while disregarding difference and disagreement. Participants such as Pat, Fintan and Cormac are mindful that to continue being perceived and preconceived by the majority Irish population as belonging to an imagined 'us' is conditional upon denying various aspects of their experiences of migration and issues relating to reintegration upon return. If participants want to successfully 'fit in', they must adopt strategies of sidelining their former experiences and memories of home elsewhere, and instead stress the affirmative aspects of belonging in the post-return context. In an effort to be accepted as one of 'us', these participants temper their feelings of 'difference', and accommodate to dominant norms and values. Their endeavours to raise concerns about feelings of non-belonging often go unrecognized by others, while a subtle process of self-censorship informs many participants' social interactions in an effort to maintain a façade of harmonious similarity.

Numerous authors argue that, despite various calls to redefine its terms, belonging to Irish society continues to be structured along largely traditional lines of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, bound up with assumptions of whiteness, Catholicism and sedentary lifestyles (Feldman 2006, 2008; Fanning 2009; Lentin 2007; Nash 2008). Placing the emphasis squarely on shared commonalities, the tenacity of a monoculturalist discourse in regulating the everyday boundaries of belonging to Irish society shows no signs of abating. In relation to recent in-migration to the Republic of Ireland, much research elaborates on how a collective Irish 'we' shores up the barriers of belonging against the newly-arrived non-Irish population (Fanning and Mutwarasibo 2007; Gray 2006b; Hickman 2002; Lentin 2007; Lentin and McVeigh 2002). Ní Laoire (2008a, 35) argues that popular accounts of recent in-migration to the Republic of Ireland operate on the rigid basis of opposing a "perceived native/Irish/white/settled/host community to an other foreign/non-white/non-Irish/nomadic/immigrant/newcomer community." In other words, the production of in-group solidarity is as much to do with differentiating 'us' from 'them' as it is with recognizing shared similarities. There is an interplay between 'sameness' and 'difference', whereby "invocations of similarity are intimately entangled with the conjuring up of difference. One of the things that people have in common in any

group is precisely the recognition of other groups or categories from whom they differ” (Jenkins 2008, 23).

The participants cited in this section so far place the emphasis on how they are preconceived as the ‘same’ as the majority Irish population. Other participants, however, stress the ways they are positioned as ‘different’ from the Irish collectivity of ‘us’ as infracting on how they articulate a sense of fitting in upon homecoming. For those participants who do not meet the relatively narrow set of criteria structuring solidarity, being categorized as different is an unexpected and everyday aspect of social interaction in the post-return context.

With other people, if you open your mouth about the States and coming back you are straightaway the ‘Yank’, the loud dominating American stereotype. . . . And that can be very difficult to deal with, because you have no recourse in a way. Like, what can you say? You just go to yourself, Right, whatever. You are told in so many words that, “We don’t want to know about what you’ve been doing all these years, because that is not what we did. We got rich, we built houses everywhere, you didn’t. So tough” (Interview with Dylan, 14/11/2007).

The thing I found the most difficult was peoples’ attitudes. People are just very narrow-minded. You know, if you talk about being away at all people are, “Oh Jesus, here she goes again, going on about America.” People shoot you down on the spot, and you are reminded that you’ve been away and because of that you are not part of that little circle (Interview with Bernadette, 06/12/2007).

No quantitative attitudinal surveys on return migrants in Irish society exists to date. Anecdotal evidence, however, suggests that popular images of returnees in many instances are far from glamorous, with derogatory stereotypes of return migrants that continuously cast aspersions on returnees’ motives for returning to the Republic of Ireland (as discussed in Chapter 3). In relation to returnees from the United States, one of the most frequent and persistent stereotypes circulating in everyday popular discourse is that of the ‘Returned Yank’. The Returned Yank, or simply Yank,

represents the cliché of the loud, socially domineering returned Irish migrant who obnoxiously proclaims the superior virtues of the United States, constantly critiquing the way things operate in Ireland, and frequently engaging in egregious displays of conspicuous wealth and vulgar materialism upon return (Dowling-Almeida 2001; Gmelch 1980, 1986; Ní Laoire 2008a). Mary Hickman (2002) relates the term Returned Yank to that of 'Plastic Paddy'. The term Plastic Paddy, argues Hickman (2002, 14), is another derogatory phrase used to "deny and denigrate the second-generation Irish in Britain", and to undermine their claims of belonging to Irish society. Hickman suggests that just like the exclusionary function of the Plastic Paddy discourse, the trope of the Returned Yank serves a similar purpose of boundary distinction and maintenance. Dylan's account of being labelled a Yank whenever he discusses his former life in the United States displays the exclusionary potential of categorizing people as 'different' from 'us'. His failure to conform to the expected patterns and routines of interaction marks him as outside the in-group. For Bernadette, dealing with the majority Irish population's attitudes towards return migrants is the most explicit challenge to fitting in upon return, as her migration episode serves as the most obvious sign of her difference from the largely sedentary Irish population.

Some participants understand popular binary discourses of 'us' versus 'them' to be so influential in structuring belonging that even minor displays of difference provoke anxious reactions from the majority Irish population. A failure on the behalf of return migrants to observe protocols of cultural similarity disrupts widespread assumptions and expectations of belonging, leading some participants to feel the exclusionary power of being categorized as different.

There was a fear there when I came back. I mean the only one who welcomed me home, who shook me hand was me father. Like I met another fellow who had returned as well one day in the local coffee shop and we were chatting and he said to me, "Pat," he says, "we'd be better off [returned emigrants] if we fucking died, and then came back, you could expect nothing," he says. He couldn't figure it out, he just didn't have the energy to go away again, but if he did he'd be gone. This guy

was 70-odd years. But there was another couple they'd moved back, but they moved off again, and they'd a house bought and everything. Like we're very intolerant. I find there's a fear in case we might know a little bit more than them. And for all the wealth there is a lot of introversion (Interview with Pat, 27/10/2007).

I tell you one thing now I think we're treated a bit suspiciously, the people who came back, when we came back, because we've a different outlook. I think it's because people tend not to adjust, to maybe look down on the way things are done in Ireland. And because you're Irish and you have lived in America maybe people don't like criticism because they thought they had made a lot of advances and things like that. People can be a little bit . . . no, hostile is the wrong word, but there's something there . . . like, even little things, like people constantly tell me, "Oh, you've a right American twang." So right away, if you are in any way different, you know, you are not accepted like John-Joe down the road who's got the big brogue from the countryside or whatever, because of something as small as the way you pronounce certain words (Interview with Cormac, 10/01/2008).

These respondents' narratives of negotiating belonging upon return suggest that it is their difference that sparks the unwelcoming reception afforded many returnees upon homecoming. The 'fear' that Pat understands to make fitting in upon return so strenuous stems from the sedentary population's anxiety that returnees may potentially 'know a little bit more than them' – thereby threatening assumptions of sameness between the sedentary Irish population and returnees. Pat suggests that the majority Irish population's reticent attitude towards returnees is, in some instances, so disquieting for return migrants that it provokes a thorough reconsideration of the return project, eventually leading some to re-emigrate shortly after return. Cormac is mindful that returnees' migration experiences lead some members of mainstream Irish society to construct return migrants as a suspect group because they hold a 'different outlook' on life to the sedentary Irish population. Describing the reception he received upon homecoming as just short of hostile, Cormac is aware that a failure

to mask or modify his difference leaves him excluded from dominant expressions of solidarity. The regulating gaze of the sedentary Irish population is so finely calibrated that it detects even minor variations from established patterns of behaviour, and the subtle process of excluding those who are ‘in any different’ is so meticulously observed that Cormac feels even his slightly Americanized accent threatens his opportunities to feel ‘accepted’ upon return.

For other participants who fail to conform to the ideal of sameness, lamenting their ‘difference’ leads them to an alternative take on the process of boundary maintenance and recruitment of in-group members. They acknowledge that the onus falls on individual returnees to accommodate themselves to the intransigent attitudes, values and practices of the majority Irish population. Nonetheless, they stress that tempering their behaviour to fit with the dominant culture’s expectations of returnees is made more difficult by the fact that they are already familiar with Irish society and hold high expectations of inclusion upon return.

In a way I envy the Polish and the Lithuanians and others who’ve come here. It’s easier from them to get along here because they have their own circles, like you see all these Polish bars and delis opened up. Sometimes I feel like I stick out like a sore thumb if I open my mouth. I’m Irish, blah-dee-blah, I’ve a fair idea how things work here, and people assume that because you’re from here then you must automatically be accepted here. But then you are not allowed to say one critical word about the place, or otherwise you’re the loud-mouth, the fellow who came back from America with all his ideas. Whereas people will actually listen to what you have to say if you’ve come from somewhere else. Like they might not want to hear it, but at least they’ll listen (Interview with Martin, 04/02/2008).

I think it’s just the culture here, it’s “this is how we do it, and if you don’t fit in, sorry, we’re not making adjustments for you.” You know, “the Polish are doing it, the Brazilians are doing it, and they don’t have the language, we make adjustments for them because they don’t have the

language, but for you, you're Irish, you can speak the language, so adjust!" That's the kind of feeling I get from the school. You know, "this is how we do it", but what's the transition? But at the same time they're [the Irish Government] inviting all these emigrants to come back to Ireland, to come and live here, but how do the people here make adjustments? How so they make a transition programme? They don't! They don't give a damn. It's not in the psychology of the educational system, of the people, because they don't have psychology! Has any of them in management ever gone and studied psychology? What I could bring to Ireland, as someone who left and has travelled around and left with very little education, and got an education abroad, and come back, they don't give a damn (Interview with Maureen, 08/12/2007).

'Fitting in' to the social terrain, observe Martin and Maureen, is markedly more obstacle-strewn for return migrants than it is for newly-arrived migrants. The majority population does not accommodate itself to the experiences of return migrants based on a pervasive assumption that they are the 'same' as 'us'. When participants attempt to articulate a sense of their difference and share this with members of the mainstream Irish population, it goes unheeded or disregarded altogether. This failure to have their experiences validated and recognized by significant others upon return is felt as acutely alienating by some participants. According to participants like Martin and Maureen, non-Irish immigrants face numerous obstacles integrating into Irish society. Nevertheless, one important benefit of being seen as a migrant group, as 'different', is the opportunity to have adjustment-problems acknowledged as real and relevant. The majority Irish population withholds such acknowledgement from returnees, however, as the overwhelming expectation that they are the same as them, as 'us', precludes the possibility of return-related difference. For Martin, paradoxically, his familiarity with established ways of interacting does not facilitate what others assume to be a seamless transition back to the Republic of Ireland. Instead, he struggles to have his voice heard and is frustrated in his attempts to leave an imprint on the social landscape. By contrast, for Martin, non-Irish born immigrant groups, who establish

their own places of consumption, worship, leisure, and so on, are visibly different, and thereby granted a voice in Irish society.

Participants like Martin and Maureen are acutely aware that it is their unenviable status as both cultural insiders and outsiders that fractures their sense of solidarity with mainstream Irish society upon return. Maureen explicitly highlights the dual positioning of return migrants in popular discourses as both the ‘same’ as and ‘different’ from the sedentary population, and highlights how returnees can become caught in the tension between the two. Drawing on an understanding of returnees as belonging to an imagined Irish collectivity based on ties of shared kin, community and culture – of ‘sameness’ – Maureen points out that the Irish Government made attempts in the early-2000s to lure Irish migrants home. However, she is at the same time mindful of what she perceives as the majority Irish population’s widespread apathy towards and rigid reception of return migrants’ experiences that are ‘different’ from mainstream mannerisms and habits. Maureen speaks and understands the same ‘language’ as those Irish people who stayed in the Republic of Ireland, yet it is her expanded vocabulary, so to speak, that frustrates her attempts to belong upon return.

The cleavage and distance between returnees and their compatriots that often emerges during social interaction represents perhaps the most difficult and emotionally charged aspect of homecoming for many participants in this research. It is certainly possible that some participants (such as Colm quoted at the start of this section) experience return in a positive way, as creating a secure sense of inclusion and incorporation in the post-return context. Far more frequent among respondents’ stories of homecoming, however, is a more complex and ambiguous account of the way social interaction with the mainstream Irish population impinges unfavourably on their feelings of belonging and sense of home upon return. The lack of empathy for their stories of return and stigmatizing labels applied to returnees negatively influences their articulations of affinity upon return, leading many participants to feel disenchanted with the prospects of (re)settlement.

8.3 Overcoming ascriptions: Contesting sameness and difference

The ways in which the mainstream Irish population categorizes return migrants as belonging or not has a significant impact on participants' capacity to fit in. That said, at the same time, participants are not denied all agency in articulating their own accounts of belonging upon return. Not all participants internalize the tepid reception they receive by the sedentary Irish population in an unreconstructed manner. As Seyla Benhabib (2002, 80) puts it, "Objective ascriptions by others can be adopted or rejected, resisted or celebrated, by those to whom they are supposed to apply." In this section I show how participants' struggles to belong to home upon return begin to blur distinctions between dualistic categories of 'us' versus 'them', 'insider' versus 'outsider', 'local' versus 'blow-in'. In this section I argue that some participants' grapple with normative expectations that they should belong upon return by actively carving out belonging in terms chosen by themselves. While mindful that there is an onus on them to engage the terms of belonging as devised by dominant sectors of Irish society, some participants insist that it is also incumbent upon the majority Irish population to temper their rigid criteria of belonging. In this section I suggest that some participants open up debates about what it means to belong to home by articulating a contentious model of belonging that reworks its boundaries along more progressive and inclusive lines. In this way, I contend, some participants leave an imprint on the social landscape by beginning to alter the normative boundaries of belonging. This is important, as it suggests that participants' lived and longed-for meanings of home begin to converge, as the idealized longing to belong starts to assume a real outline.

Table 8.2 Contesting normative ascriptions of belonging

Definition of home	Manifestation	Number of responses
Terms of belonging to home defined by others as well as oneself	Disrupts binaries of 'us' versus 'them', 'native' versus 'settler'	10
Dialectic of 'sameness' and 'difference' define membership to home	Constructs alternative normative boundaries of belonging to home	11
Total number of participants who responded:		15

As mentioned, many participants perceive their experiences of belonging in the post-return context as frequently inferiorized and subtly silenced by others. Other participants, nevertheless, are simultaneously resistant to this mundane muzzling of 'difference'. The prevalent monoculturalist discourse does not go uncontested, as some respondents challenge the expectation that return migrants behave the 'same' as an homogenously imagined Irish collectivity.

Irish people hate to have anyone tell them that maybe they don't do things in the best way possible. And they really hate it when you come back and you point out a few home truths. Like, there is just so much sick complicity in Ireland. Look at all the cover-ups in the church and all that disgusting child abuse. The politicians are the most corrupt in the world I'd say, while everyone in the whole country knows they are corrupt. The guards, look at all the scandals; the hospitals, falling to pieces. There is such corruption here. Like you have to look at your own conscience sometimes and decide what's best for you. Like there's many things that are great about Ireland. The same fellow who'd take the mickey out of you for speaking in an American accent is also the fellow who would bend-over backwards to help you out if you were in a tight situation. But you know, I remember in Boston I used to drink Heineken, and guys

would come up to you and go, “Hey buddy, why aren’t you drinking Guinness?” I used to hate that clichéd shite, and that same obnoxious thing happens here as well. People assume you are Irish and you are prepared to put up with everything here. . . . But I really can’t stand some things here and I tell people as much. Like to allow some of the things that have happened here, really it’s shameful (Interview with Noel, 08/10/2007).

I was told in a pub once that that I had abandoned Ireland. Because I’d left in the ’80s when things weren’t going great here, there was no work. A fellow told me as much that I had betrayed Ireland. Would you credit that, would you? And that I was only coming back now because times were good. That kind of attitude is very disappointing. Like this complete bullshit that you abandoned the place. . . . But the other side is, like, I’m from Upperchurch and I’ve moved back here and I’m known locally, so I get all my work because people know me, they know my father, my brothers. So you feel kind of discriminated against in one way, and then in another you’re one of their own. . . . The only way really is to take them to task over what they are saying. If you interrogate them a small bit, you see, they redden up because they know they’ve no argument (Interview with Joe, 20/12/2007).

Noel and Joe’s narratives of homecoming are important, as they articulate a tension between the desire to belong to the dominant social sectors, while also desiring to distinguish themselves from them. They want to be treated as the same as members of the sedentary Irish population, yet at the same time they demand that their difference from such powerful and homogenized cultural constructs of belonging be recognized and respected. Their shifting and ambiguous attachments as both cultural insiders and outsiders is by no means a situation unique to return migrants. However, their positioning as both ‘locals’ and ‘blow-ins’ in the post-return context serves to accentuate the blurred and complex nature of the relationship between home and belonging. Their stories of feeling-at-home upon homecoming complicate jaded binary categories of sameness and difference, of belonging and alienation.

Participants like Noel and Joe take an infinitesimal step in minting a novel grammar of belonging that is resistant to others' perceptions and expectations from overly impinging on their sense of solidarity. Rather than settling into the resignation of non-belonging, or re-migrating elsewhere, these participants' resilient 'struggle for recognition' (Honneth 1995) does not countenance the denial of the return migrant experience. Instead, these participants make informal but insistent demands on the sedentary population to expand, re-imagine and blur the boundaries of belonging, arguing for the legitimacy of a more inclusive and pliable model of membership that recognizes difference within the sameness of the imagined Irish 'we'.

The previously-cited participants suggest a more complex model of membership that contests prevailing expectations that demand return migrants to be the same as members of mainstream Irish society. Other participants, however, explicitly challenge these demands to be the same by asserting and externalizing their 'difference' in a real and visible way.

Like some people would try to make you think they are superior or something to you. I mean, because you haven't been here the whole time. And they're so proud of their Celtic Tiger. But you know, I'm not about to let people talk down to me because I wasn't here all the time. There's this fierce anti-Americanism I've got. Like, they call me American. And they all hate America and they all hate Bush and they think they're on some moral high-ground because they went to some anti-war demonstration. I just get so irritated by that, and I've got angry with people because they are so ignorant sometimes. I mean, I told them that half of the people in America were opposed to going into Iraq. And that there were demonstrations as big as the Vietnam protests. . . . I've told people that I have dual citizenship, I mean 15 years in America, I am a citizen of there, I live here now, and I don't agree with war or something, but this kneejerk anti-Americanism is directed at me and I won't stand for it any more (Interview with Elaine, 17/11/2007).

Me and the kids and Marlyn were looking at a house one day, and a fellow came down, and he asked me where I'm from. Mountbellew I told him, and I suppose he might have picked up some twang in my accent and he probably heard the kids yelling around the place, they still had very strong American accents at the time, and he goes, "Goddamn Yanks". Now he really didn't mean it, and that sort of thing you'll get it, very subtle, and an awful lot of people don't even know they're doing it, but now maybe some of them do, but Marlyn was raging with the fellow. And she took him up on it and asked him what he meant by that. Sure as soon as she did that the cat got his tongue. . . . And you know she was right, because all the kids were born in America, and she's American and I feel strongly about the place, so why should you let that narrow-mindedness effect you, making comments about us, calling the children Yanks. I mean, imagine if I met his children and started calling them Paddies or Culshies or something, I mean you wouldn't get away with it (Interview with Pat, 27/10/2007).

I work in construction, you know. . . . All people want here are bungalows. Now, I built my own house when I came back, and when people saw that I was doing things a little bit differently, my god, they looked at me as if I had two heads. I remember the neighbours were in on me and they'd be going, "Now, the way I'd do it is . . ." You, see, they want all the houses looking the same. And if you try to stand out at all you are being too big for your boots, or at least that's the attitude I got. But I wouldn't please them, and I build the house the way me and Josephine wanted it. Like it's only natural that I'd like some of the American style homes after working in construction there for near twenty years (Interview with Alan, 22/02/2008).

The onus placed on return migrants to accommodate to mainstream Irish society's norms and expectations is not fully accepted by a number of participants in my research. Some participants refuse to blend into the assumed sameness of Irish society, instead asserting their own brand of belonging by upsetting accepted codes

of public behaviour. Rather than internalizing others' categorization of him and his family as 'Yanks', Pat contests the label by interrogating others about what they mean by such disparaging comments. Elaine objects to what she understands as the ill-informed opinions of many Irish people regarding the United States. While not necessarily endorsing the United States' military's foreign policy, Elaine understands the anti-Americanism that many Irish people express to her as a euphemism for not fully accepting her as belonging to Irish society. In the face of what she perceives as a thinly veiled antagonism towards her, Elaine insists that her affiliation with the United States and with the Republic of Ireland are not mutually exclusive conditions, but that a dual affinity with both places happily co-exist. Alan's attempt at altering the landscape to fit with his own ideas of domestic architecture is perhaps the most explicit externalizing of difference among participants' accounts of belonging. Alan's failure to observe the protocols of vernacular housing design prompts unease among his Irish-born neighbours, as his dwelling is visibly distinguished from those surrounding it. Nevertheless, Alan refuses to comply with what he perceives as his neighbours' expectations that his house appear the same as everyone else's. In effect, Alan is refusing to accept the terms of membership as laid-down by dominant sectors of Irish society. Instead, he attempts to (literally) carve out a space of belonging on his own terms. By transforming the physical environment, Alan is also attempting to transform the terms in which membership is understood.

In sum, by challenging stereotypes about return migrants and resisting demands that they look, behave, speak, and even build in ways that conform to the dominant culture's expectations, participants like Elaine, Pat and Alan begin to engage mainstream Irish society in ways that expand the criteria of belonging in important ways. Their accounts suggest that belonging is not only about meeting the terms of membership as defined by mainstream Irish society, but also about having one's own ideas and ideals of 'fitting in' recognized and heard. In their attempts to alter local attitudes and norms of belonging, these participants try to forge an environment where, ultimately, they feel more 'at home'. In effect, while a tension between the lived and longed-for meanings of home persists, some participants' efforts to fit in upon homecoming begin to overcome the uneasiness around the real and ideal parameters of belonging. Participants' endeavours to interact with members of

mainstream Irish society on terms of their own devising suggest that the longing to belong loses some of its imagined qualities, and instead assumes a real outline. Their yearnings to fit in take shape not only in their minds, but start to make inroads into the spaces around them. Through their daily practices, negotiations and interactions with dominant social spheres, their imprint on contesting normative boundaries of belonging is felt.

It is important to stress, however, that participants' demands to have their difference recognized does not mean that they reject all attributions of sameness to the majority Irish population. On the contrary, many participants are keen to temper their claims to difference, and instead emphasize the many characteristics, tastes, beliefs, values, and so on, they share with the dominant culture. Where they depart from mainstream Irish society's normative constructions of belonging, however, is on their insistence that defining the terms of membership is not a unilateral process, but involves negotiation and accommodation from both themselves and dominant others. One participant asserts the need to recognize both sameness and difference when defining home, making reciprocation a precondition of belonging: "When in Rome, do as the Romans do, sure. But, another cliché, you also have to step into other peoples' shoes and try and see things from their perspective" (Interview with Andy, 22/01/2008).

8.5 Conclusion

Having analyzed participants' various subjective accounts of home in Chapters 6 and 7, in this final analysis chapter of the thesis I examined how home is also partly defined by the ways in which other people categorize one as belonging or not to it. I considered the ways in which participants' narratives of feeling 'at home' are influenced by the majority Irish population's labelling of return migrants as belonging in various ways upon homecoming. I showed how popular discursive constructions of return migrants as either the same as or different from the majority Irish population are familiar refrains to participants in my research, and variously shape their experiences of affinity in the post-return context. For some, the normative expectation that return migrants are the same as the sedentary Irish population reinforces positive feelings of affiliation upon return. For others, this results in an

overwhelming pressure to suppress their difference and conform to accepted patterns of behaviour, while for other still, the failure to observe protocols of sameness marks them out as different from the majority population, and therefore, as not-quite-belonging.

I argued further, however, that the dominant culture's normative expectations of return migrants as belonging, or not, do not entirely define participants' ideas of belonging upon homecoming. Despite the constraining influence of discursive constructions of returnees as either the same as or different from the majority Irish population, I suggested that some participants remain undeterred in their desire to carve out and reconfigure an alternate model of membership upon return. Galvanized by the testing experience of return, some participants articulate an idiom of inclusion that contests any rigid dichotomy polarizing 'born-and-bred' locals against transient 'blow-ins'. Instead, as I demonstrated, their narratives suggest a conception of belonging that recognizes reciprocity to be at the heart of any meaningful experience of home. In other words, a normative model of belonging to home cannot be sustained only by meeting the dominant culture's demands to behave the same as them; it also requires the dominant culture to accommodate participants' demands to respect and recognize their difference. By insisting on this alternative understanding of belonging, some participants begin to bridge the gap between home's lived and longed-for meanings, as the yearning to belong upon return loses some of its idealized features and assumes actual shape. This is important because, despite the difficulties associated with fitting in for many participants upon return, asserting solidarity on their own terms unsettles the stability of accepted forms of belonging to home.

Chapter 9 Conclusions

9.1 Summary of research findings

In this thesis I attempted to explore and explain how the research participants' (re)settlement experiences influenced their ideas of home. By drawing on an analysis of in-depth interviews, I argued that participants' accounts of negotiating homecoming represent an alternative to fixed, bounded and exclusionary understandings of home, without necessarily downplaying the longing for a discreet, foundational and originary home. I contended that this is significant because participants' narratives of home begin to challenge narrow readings of locality and stable definitions of identity. At the same time, their articulations of home bring into sharp relief awkward questions about who belongs to particular places, and on what basis claims to membership are made.

I developed this argument throughout the thesis by analyzing participants' negotiations of (re)settlement in the old/new places they inhabit. In Chapter 5 I showed how the majority of participants habitually account for the return decision as the restoration of a settled, secure sense of home. I showed that while participants' decisions to return are complex and variegated, alongside and overlaying the mundane, everyday pull and push considerations that prompt mobility decisions lies a more abstract and general notion of the 'myth of home' heavily informing the return decision. I showed that this myth of home stems from certain expectations surrounding homecoming, expectations to do with re-insertion into a familiar, predictable and bounded home. I demonstrated how this myth of home is not an unvarying 'pull' in influencing participants, but varies in intensity over the life course. I illustrated how the majority of research participants' expectancy over returning to a secure, stable, and bounded environment coincides with major life course transitions, co-articulated with ideas of 'settling down'.

This portrait of participants' expectations about homecoming is interesting insofar as it contrasts in many instances with their actual experiences of (re)settlement – leading many to rethink home upon return. I began this examination of participants' (re)settlement experiences and the ways in which it influences what home means to

them in Chapter 6. I showed that embedding home exclusively in an irreplaceable ‘original home’ remains an important way of understanding the concept for a number of participants, and reaffirms sedentarist ideas of people-place relationships. For such participants, the expectation surrounding homecoming to a stable, settled home converges with their (re)settlement experience. Despite this, I demonstrated that alongside such essentialized place-based understandings of home, many participants problematize the notion that their ‘native place’ coincides with ‘where’ they locate home, leading them to articulate more multiple and mobile conceptions of home. Some participants successfully suture and connect various places both ‘here’ and ‘there’ to establish pluri-local place-attachments. For others, however, this spatial stretching of home disrupts their sense of where home is, creating ambivalent feelings of being ‘out of place’ both ‘here’ and ‘there’. I then examined how unhinging home from one’s place of origin unsettles foundational accounts of return-as-homecoming, suggesting to many participants that home must be made upon return. Through their embodied routines and iterated daily practices that connect a range of locations, participants actively carve out home upon return. Embedding home in multiple places through translocal acts and practices mitigates the displacement that accompanies (re)settlement for many participants. I argued further that participants’ lived experience of connecting home to both far-flung and nearby places is significant because it offers an empirical elaboration of the entwined nature of fixed and fluid elements at the heart of home. The elucidation of home’s dimension of location advanced throughout Chapter 6 places centre stage the simultaneity of home’s stable and shifting meanings. Participants’ (re)settlement experiences suggest that they concurrently uproot and reground home across various locations. Their narratives begin to undo binaries separating dynamic and static notions of home, as they live life translocally, yet yearn to fix it in a singular place.

In Chapter 7 I built on this argument by examining participants’ expressions of self in relation to home. The chapter began with a discussion of participants’ expressions of identity in terms of a fixed home. For some, the evocation of strong points of identification with territorially non-transferable traditions and culture in the Republic of Ireland constitutes a firm binding between self and home. I then discussed those participants’ narratives of identity expressed through the loss of home. I looked at

how, in some instances, the (re)settlement experience disrupts expectations of finding an authentic or core self upon homecoming. In this light, I contented that the majority of participants resist binary frameworks that entrap identification with home either 'here' or 'there'. The emergence of such hybrid identities means that some participants confidently link and bridge complex identifications with multiple homes. A further consequence of such hybrid identities is that participants display an appreciation of the ways in which they must 'do identity' (Christou 2006a) upon (re)settlement. This suggests to participants that (re)settlement involves negotiation around complex and often-conflicting identities, thus showing that the relationship between home and identity is neither fixed nor stable. In some instances this leads participants to an unanticipated identification with home as a 'return migrant'. I argued that participants' identifications with home as returnees awkwardly positions them somewhere on the margins *and* in the mainstream. Nevertheless, such emergent, pluralized and shifting registers of identification with home do not snuff out the striving for an established, singular and fixed identity: even as they are mindful that a complete identification with home cannot be recaptured, participants continue to cling to a conception of home and identity as harmonized.

Chapters 6 and 7 examined participants' subjective appreciation of the concept of home. In Chapter 8 I examined how home is also partly defined by the ways in which other people categorize one as belonging to it or not. I considered how participants' descriptions of feeling 'at home' are influenced by the majority Irish population's labelling of return migrants as belonging in various ways in the post-return context. I showed how popular discursive constructions of return migrants as either the same as or different from the majority Irish population shape their experiences of affinity upon homecoming. For some, the normative expectation that return migrants blend unproblematically with the sedentary Irish population reaffirms positive feelings of affiliation upon return, while for others this very same expectation causes an overwhelming pressure to suppress their difference and conform to accepted patterns of behaviour. For others still, failing to observe protocols of sameness marks them out as different from the majority population, and therefore, as not-quite-belonging. I argued, however, that the dominant culture's normative expectations of return migrants as belonging, or not, do not entirely define participants' ideas of home upon

return. Despite the limitations that such discursive constructions place on participants' capacity to articulate their own ideas (and ideals) of home, I suggested that many remain undeterred in their desire to carve out and reconfigure an alternate model of membership upon return. Some participants articulate an idiom of inclusion that contests any rigid dichotomy polarizing 'born-and-bred' locals against transient 'blow-ins'. Instead, their narratives suggest a conception of belonging that recognizes reciprocity to be at the heart of any meaningful experience of home. I showed how some participants suggest that the terms by which belonging to home are defined cannot be dictated exclusively by dominant members of Irish society; the dominant culture must also recognize returnees' own terms of inclusion. By insisting on this normative alternative to belonging, some participants begin to bridge the gap between home's lived and longed-for meaning. The desire to 'fit in' upon homecoming sheds some of its idealized features, and takes on a more definite outline.

9.2 Limitations of the thesis and directions for future research

A number of caveats must accompany the contributions that my research makes to the field – which at the same time suggests directions for future research on home. Perhaps the most obvious limitation of this thesis is that it does not focus on the present-day realities of migration in the Republic of Ireland. My research focused on a time of unprecedented positive net-migration in the Republic of Ireland (1996-2006), and I carried out my fieldwork with some of the 1980s/1990s Irish-born emigrant cohort who had returned from living in the United States at the height of this period, from September 2007 to February 2008. The global recession that started in 2008 has severely affected the Republic of Ireland's economic situation, with obituaries to the 'Celtic Tiger' regularly appearing in public and media discussions. The deepening economic downturn has resulted in a major contraction of the numbers of people in employment in the state – and one of the most familiar demographic patterns of the Republic of Ireland's history recommenced: emigration. The Economic and Social Research Institute (2010) forecasts negative net-migration of 40,000 for the year ending April 2010, up from 7,800 in the previous year. Some of those leaving are recently-arrived non-Irish immigrants, while others are first-time

and repeat Irish emigrants. There is a need for future research on the ideas of home of my chosen cohort of return migrants to investigate how the current economic slowdown has influenced (if at all) their ideas of home. Since economic motives were one shared feature of participants' reasons for returning to the Republic of Ireland, it could be expected that changes to the country's economic outlook changes their relationship with the notion of home. Such future research would make for an ideal epilogue to the current thesis.

A further drawback of the current thesis is that it did not examine the (re)settlement experiences of Irish-born return migrants who came back to live in Northern Ireland. Recent scholarly work on Northern Ireland investigates how a traditional and resilient sectarianism intersects with more recent multicultural agendas to structure social relations in Northern Irish society (Geoghegan 2008). Ideas of home held by return migrants in a post-conflict society like Northern Ireland are undoubtedly complex. One fruitful avenue of future research to enhance perspectives on the power of the idea of home could compare and contrast conceptualizations of home among Irish-born and Northern Irish-born return migrants.

Another qualification to keep in mind in relation to the current thesis is that I did not interview Irish people who have remained in the Republic of Ireland. As discussed in Chapter 8, the attitudes and beliefs of the majority Irish population feature heavily as an influence on participants' articulations of home. Further research could explore the sedentary Irish population's views vis-à-vis return Irish-born migrants. This data could then be analysed and compared against participants' accounts of how they see themselves as categorized by the stay-at-home majority Irish population.

From a conceptual perspective, issues of class and gender and how they relate to the notion of home did not feature as axes of analysis in my research. As discussed in Chapter 4, this omission was motivated by participants' own silence on these issues when it came to speaking about their (re)settlement experiences. The interviews I conducted with members of the 1980s/1990s Irish-born emigrant cohort reflected the diversity of the return migrant population from the United States in terms of sex,

educational attainments, and socio-economic status (as summarized in Appendix IV). No distinct connection between class/gender position and particular conceptualizations of home emerged from the analysis of participants' narratives in the current thesis. My research elaborates particular understandings of the complex notion of home that appear to be generalizable across class and gender differences. This is not to suggest that class and gender do not remain important determinants of how people experience and understand the notion of home. Clearly home remains a pre-eminent site of social reproduction, with the role of class and gender featuring prominently in shaping the experience of home. There is an identifiable need for future research that looks at the ways in which class and gender impinges on returnees' articulations of home. A further additional avenue of research on returnees' homes could examine differences within and across generational lines. My research focused exclusively on the 1980s/1990s emigrant cohort. Expanding the remit of the research design to include both earlier and later generations of Irish return migrants could generate further perspectives on home's variegated meanings.

Finally, I alluded at various points throughout the thesis that the results of my research are suggestive of patterns of understanding home that are generalizable beyond the immediate experience of my particular cohort of return migrants. While this may be the case, it is also important to recognize the limits of how applicable my findings are to other contexts and other groups of people. In the words of Rapport and Dawson (1998, 9), it is useful to recognize the "universally affective power of home". Meanwhile, it is crucial to interrogate why home does not affect all people in the same way. For example, while they may share some common characteristics in terms of how they understand home, the refugee's experience of home qualitatively differs from that of the elite business traveller's, the political exile's from the non-domiciled tax exile's, the asylum seeker's from the tourist's, the disabled person's from the homeless person's, and so on. One way future research could enrich understanding of the concept would be to contrast the ideas of home of my relatively privileged research participants with those of less privileged groups in society, such as non-Irish immigrants and travellers. So while the findings presented in my

research suggest some facets of the compelling concept of home, they are far from a universally representative model of what home means.

9.3 Implications of the research findings

The findings of my research suggest a number of theoretical implications for scholarly work on home. First, the principal ramification is that home cannot be viewed singly as either static or mobile. Instead, I contend that the fixed and fluid components of home must be viewed as enmeshed and working together. There has been a tendency in previous research to separate out the dynamic and the moored moments of home. My research demonstrates that the grounded and uprooted must be conceptualized in tandem in order to more accurately reflect the complexity and ambivalence at the heart of home. As discussed in the summary, the findings of my research pertain particularly to the study of home in the context of return migration. The qualities of home explored in this thesis have a more general application and relevance to research on home in other contexts and for different groups of people, however. Return migrants present an especially apposite subgroup for studying the complexities of home insofar as they attempt to (re)settle in the old/new place of return. This complexity of home, however, is not exclusive to return migration. For example, people who remain in their place of origin are not necessarily grounded to home, while the peripatetic are not necessarily uprooted.

Second, recognition of participants' capacity to simultaneously articulate stable and shifting conceptions of home highlights the ongoing tension between its dual meanings: the lived qualities of home as malleable and nomadic, and the longed-for state of a bounded and sedentary home. Previous research pays inordinate interest to the role that current circumstances – lived conditions – play in peoples' efforts to make sense of home, without paying sufficient attention to the important place of imagination, aspiration, and desire in shaping the meaning of home. The analysis of home that I presented in this thesis suggests that the yearned-for may be as significant as the 'real' in influencing peoples' ideas of home.

Third, breaking-down home into its dominant dimensions helps avoid much of the conceptual confusion sometimes evident in previous studies of home. The findings presented in this thesis (and visually displayed in Appendix V) show that home carries multiple and overlapping meanings for people. The framework used in this thesis (as discussed in Chapter 2) for unpacking home along the lines of location, identification, and belonging has three main benefits. First, it allows for the empirically clustered elements of home to be kept analytically separate; second, the shared features that each of home's dominant dimensions displays becomes evident; and finally, the distinctive features of each domain are clearly and quickly highlighted. This heuristic for analysing home overcomes some of the notorious difficulty in defining the term, and could be applied to other studies using the idea of home as the main conceptual focus.

Fourth, the analysis of home's dimension of location (as discussed in Chapter 6) addresses current research on the spatial forms of 'where' home is located in contemporary societies. Much recent research on migrants' homes shows how home is a prime site for connecting people, places, things, and cultures across time and space. The ways in which migrants link their lives to both their ancestral and host countries exemplifies home's frontier-bridging capacity to span and connect spatially remote locations. The findings presented in this thesis suggest, however, that there has been an overemphasis on the relational, elastic aspects of home, without sufficient consideration of its rooted, grounded elements. I contend that home is an accordion-like concept: it both stretches to expand people outwards to distant and disparate places, while also squeezing to embed them in their immediate locales and social relations.

Fifth, the findings presented in this thesis speak to research on the relationship between home and identity. Much research exists elaborating the ways in which home is a metaphor for identity, and vice versa. Some research suggests that home is a manifestation or mirror of selfhood, while other research looks at the ways in which identification with home shifts in meaning and form, refracting hybrid and dynamic identities. The analysis of home's dimension of identification that I offered

in Chapter 7 suggests that these two approaches should not be conceptualized as mutually exclusive: flexible, fluctuating subjectivities disrupt the expectation of an ‘authentic’ identification with a foundational home, without thereby reducing the longing to anchor the self in a singular home.

Sixth, the notion of home advanced in this thesis softens the hard boundaries between the private and the public sides of home. Taken together, the findings presented in the empirical chapters of the thesis showed how both individual and collective understandings of home invade one another. The ways in which participants imbue the notion of home with meaning displays the overlapping influence of both subjective as well as broader social definitions of home (especially evident in Chapter 8). It is not enough to approach the concept of home as the product of peoples’ idiosyncratic sense-making efforts; at the same time, established group patterns of meaning inflect the ways in which people conceptualize home.

Seventh, the findings presented in this thesis suggest that peoples’ capacity to articulate a conception of home is not over-determined by public categorizations that aim to fix the meaning of home. Dominant societal groups exert a strong influence on shaping the general terms by which home is defined. They demarcate normative boundaries around home’s meaning, and limit the range of publicly acceptable definitions of home. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in the empirical chapters of the thesis, peoples’ efforts to carve out a model of home on their own terms unsettle normative constructions of home, and suggest the fundamentally fragile and porous nature of reified social representations of home.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, participants’ narratives suggest an alternate, progressive conceptualization of home insofar as they display an ability to tolerate the ambiguity inherent to the notion of home. A lot of recent scholarship contends that the ideal of the fixed, stable home is a reactionary and exclusionary space that admits only that which is internally the same as it, and expels all expressions of difference and otherness. Instead, many of these recent studies commend a transgressive politics of home that is open to risk, boundary-crossings, and the

uncanny strangeness of that which is different from ‘us’: the ‘other’. Other scholarship, however, advises against throwing the baby out with the bathwater: while it is important to remain attentive to the movement of difference in home, this does not necessarily mean shunning the desire for a fixed, bounded interpretation of home. In other words, the ‘frozen geometry’ (Varley 2008) of reactionary-exclusive homes versus transgressive-open homes is partly overcome by attending to the co-presence of sameness and difference at the heart of home. Some participants in my research begin to undo polarized accounts of home as either reactionary or transgressive. Both blending with and blurring the boundaries around the ideal home, these participants at once heed their sameness to and difference from normative constructions of home.

As for Jennifer – whose wedding story opened up the discussion of how (re)settlement experiences may bear on ideas of home – her closing remarks offer a fitting testament to the way home carries within it the shifting and bundled meanings that give the concept such appeal. Picking over the previous day’s events in her house in Galway the morning after her cousin’s wedding, things hadn’t been all bad, she admitted. It was heart-warming seeing all the family assembled together like that. And maybe she had over-reacted to her family’s questions, she now felt. They could be intrusive, but probably had her and MacDarragh’s best interests at heart. As for the stray comments about return migrants being a scourge on scarce resources, well, a thick skin is a must wherever one finds oneself, Jennifer reasoned. If some people felt the need to direct disparaging remarks about return migrants towards her, then really, Jennifer thought, they should take a look at themselves first.

On reflection, the wedding was as much tinged with delight as it was disappointment, and by extension, her prospects surrounding homecoming were weighted with equal measures of apprehension and hope. Imbuing home with meaning is a precarious balancing act between past memories, present circumstances, and future aspirations for herself and her son. For the timebeing, it was good having an extended family network around her for support, even if that did mean making some compromises. In the longer-term, though, if things didn’t work out for her and MacDarragh, they

hadn't burned all their bridges with New York. The possibility was always there to go back, or even start afresh elsewhere. Coming home was not a move without recourse. But in the meantime, Jennifer wouldn't allow others' prejudice and ignorance to interfere with her hopes of establishing a sense of home for herself and her son. For her, the needle on the compass of home points in a definite direction, even if it wavers equivocally from one side to the other. In the fallout from the wedding, Jennifer presents a view of home as both bracing and testing, as an unavoidable interplay between pros and cons. Expressing a sentiment shared by many of the return migrants I spoke with throughout the course of my research, Jennifer insists that,

Coming home is difficult. I mean, you have all these ideas and memories of what it is going to be like. And then it often goes a bit pear-shaped, and you start to-ing and fro-ing about where you want to be. I mean that's the thing about home, it's always this mixture of wanting to stay and wanting to go, isn't it? But then when you are in a situation you can't let the least thing send you packing either. You have to stand your ground (Interview with Jennifer, 09/09/2007).

Appendix I: Consent Form

Project title: *Understanding home: the case of Irish-born return migrants from the United States, 1996-2006*

The purpose of this agreement is to make sure that your recorded interview and any other material you give me are used in accordance with your wishes. By signing this form you are giving permission to place excerpts from the interview in my PhD thesis and possible future publications in academic journals. Your interview and background details will be kept anonymous. This means that your name and address will not be made available to the public or to other researchers. Whatever additional restrictions and/or conditions you may wish to impose below will be adhered to.

Restrictions/Conditions

.....
.....
.....
.....
.

Signature of Participant.....Date.....

I am prepared to respect the wishes of participants regarding the use of any information they share with me. I am prepared and willing to answer any questions concerning the research procedures or other aspects of the project. I recognize that any participant is free to withdraw consent, to discontinue participation in the project, or to deny answering to specific questions.

Signature of Interviewer.....Date.....

Appendix II: Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

I am a postgraduate student at the University of Edinburgh carrying out research on Irish people recently returned from living in the United States. I am looking for people to take part in this project. I would like to interview people who grew up in Ireland, then left during the years of high emigration in the 1980s and early 1990s, and have recently returned to live in a very different Ireland.

While much political and media discussion focuses on the immigration of non-nationals into Ireland, those Irish-born people who have returned to live in Ireland in recent years are often an invisible stream of migrants coming into the country. Their experiences of readjusting to 'Celtic Tiger' Ireland are not straight forward, and this project wants to give voice to their experiences of emigration, and return.

The interviews are being conducted as part of a research project based in the Geography Department of the University of Edinburgh. Interviews can be conducted at a location of the interviewees' choice, and should not last much more than one hour. The project wishes to record the experiences of the Morrison and Donnelly Visa generation, as well as the experiences of those who may have spent many years in the United States without a visa.

Yours sincerely,

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Appendix III: Interview Guide

Personal Background

Can you tell me about your family and where you grew up?

Did any of your family members, neighbours, friends move abroad? If so, tell me about that.

Do you remember ever considering moving abroad when you were young or at school?

Migration History

Departure

Tell me about how you decided to move to America?

- 1) Was it a difficult decision to make?
- 2) Do you remember telling your family and friends that you were leaving?

Did you have any sense or intention regarding how long you might be away for?

Did you leave on your own, or with someone? Did you know anyone at your destination?

Arrival

Can you tell me what it was like when you arrived in America?

- 1) What did you do for accommodation, work etc.?
- 2) Can you tell me about your time there, in terms of your everyday life, work, friendships, relationships, socialising, etc?

Do you think being Irish in America at the time was an advantage or a disadvantage?

If you were there after 9/11, did you feel any change in reception by Americans?

Contact with Ireland/maintenance of transnational connections/practices

Did you have contact with Ireland while you were there? What kind of contact? What was that like?

Did you return to Ireland for visits? What was that like? How did it make you feel?

Did any of your friends/family from Ireland come to visit you? What was that like?

Where you ever homesick or nostalgic for home?

Return

Leading up to the return

Tell me about how you came to return to Ireland.

Was it a difficult decision? Why/not? What prompted it?

Did you read any government literature on returning to Ireland in America?

Do you remember telling your family and friends in Ireland that you were returning?

Do you remember telling friends/colleagues in America that you were returning to Ireland?

Had other Irish people you knew in America left before you? Did you notice the Irish community changing in any way in America?

The move back

Where in Ireland did you return to? Why?

How did you find being back here the first year?

Did anyone move back to Ireland with you (partner/children)? If so, what do you think it was like for them? What did it mean for you to have them with you?

What was it like when you arrived? How did it feel for the first few weeks?

What were the best and worst things about being back in Ireland, doesn't matter how trivial?

What did you miss most about America?

What did you miss least?

Have you settled back into life in Ireland? If so, did it take long?

Do you think you've made the right decision to return?

Work

What do you work at now? Is it a similar job to your job in America?

Did you have trouble finding work when you got back? Was it the kind of work you wanted?

Do you find much competition in the industry?

Do you think your working life in America has helped you get work you wanted here in Ireland?

What do you think you'd be working at now if you'd stayed in America?

Quality of life

How would you rate your quality of life now in comparison to your quality of life in America?

Refer to: income, standard of living, housing, travel to work, social life, health, etc.

Children (if applicable)

How would you have felt about bringing up children in America?

Family, home and belonging

Do your family still live in the locality? If so, how have they found it?

Are you still friends with the same people you were friends with growing up in Ireland? If so, have these friendships changed in any way as a result of your emigration? Do you talk to them about your life in America?

Do you feel accepted here? By your family, the local community? How do you get along with the neighbours?

Have you maintained friendships from when you were in America? Are they still in America? Have you gone back to visit?

Have you been changed by the fact that you spent x-years in the USA?

Is the return to Ireland as you imagined it to be, or is the reality very different? Has it been a 'culture shock'?

What have you found most challenging about being back in Ireland?

What have you found best about being back in Ireland?

Can you tell me what 'home' means to you?

Do you feel like you belong here?

Do you feel you belong more here than you did in the USA, or you feel like you belong in equal measure to both countries and their cultures?

Do you ever consider moving away again?

Did you feel like you were removed from your Irish roots and Irish culture while abroad?

General

Do you think that being away has made you see Ireland differently?

Did you return more for personal and social reasons or was it more related to professional and economic reasons? Or both?

Is there anything in America that you feel connected to and might return for?

In general, how do you feel about (1) having moved away in the first place, and (2) coming back to Ireland?

Have you encountered any anti-Americanism here in Ireland?

Can you refer me to another returned emigrant from America?

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Appendix IV: Main characteristics of research participants

Name	Sex	Age	Education	Occupation	Relationship Status	Place of birth	Current residence	Countries lived in (1yr+)	US yr left-return
Alan	Male	41	Second level	Construction	Married	Fermanagh	Tipperary	UK/US /Germany	1988-2006
Andy	Male	43	PhD degree	Academic	Cohabiting	Meath	Galway	UK/US /France	1989-2003
Anne	Female	39	BA degree	Florist	Single	Kildare	Galway	UK/US	1994-2006
Brid	Female	40	Second level	Nurse	Married	Tipperary	Tipperary	UK/US	1991-2004
Bernadette	Female	37	Second level	Unemployed	Cohabiting	Tipperary	Tipperary	US	1995-2002
Colm	Male	43	Second level	Construction	Single	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US /Germany	1988-2001
Cormac	Male	41	MA degree	Civil servant	Single	Offaly	Dublin	UK/US	1987-2002
Dan	Male	38	BA degree	Accountant	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US	1995-2005
Diarmuid	Male	44	Second level	Unemployed	Single	Galway	Galway	UK/US	1988-2004
Dylan	Male	42	MA degree	Accountant	Married	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US	1990-2005
Elaine	Female	37	Second level	Mature student	Single	Sligo	Galway	UK/US /Spain/France	1992-2006
Elizabeth	Female	36	BA degree	Insurance	Married	Dublin	Dublin	US	1995-2004
Fintan	Male	38	Second level	Unemployed	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	US	1991-2005
Fiona	Female	37	BA degree	Unemployed	Cohabiting	Galway	Galway	UK/US /Australia	1995-2003
Harry	Male	44	Second level	Journalist	Married	Sligo	Sligo	UK/US /South Africa	1996-2006
Jennifer	Female	38	BA degree	Writer	Cohabiting	Leitrim	Galway	UK/US /France	1993-2002
Johanna	Female	37	BA degree	Retail	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	US	1995-2004
Joe	Male	39	Second level	Construction	Single	Tipperary	Tipperary	UK/US /Germany	1994-2004
John	Male	44	Second level	Taxi driver	Married	Dublin	Dublin	US	1988-2001
Joseph	Male	42	BA degree	Accountant	Cohabiting	Offaly	Dublin	UK/US	1990-2005
Kate	Female	41	BA degree	Mature student	Cohabiting	Dublin	Galway	UK/US	1994-2003
Maria	Female	38	Second level	Nurse	Married	Galway	Galway	UK/US	1995-2005
Martin	Male	41	MA degree	Teacher	Married	Galway	Galway	UK/US New Zealand	1989-2002
Mary	Female	36	Second level	Retail	Married	Dublin	Cork	US	1994-2003
Maureen	Female	39	Second level	Mature student	Single	Galway	Galway	UK/US /South Africa	1995-2006
Noel	Male	43	Second level	Publican	Divorced	Tipperary	Galway	UK/US	1993-2002
Olive	Female	39	Second level	Civil servant	Single	Galway	Galway	US	1995-2004
Padraig	Male	45	BA degree	Insurance	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	US	1987-2005
Pat	Male	42	Second level	Construction	Married	Galway	Galway	UK/US /Germany	1996-2005
Patrick	Male	40	BSc degree	Construction	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US /Australia	1992-2001
Pauline	Female	43	BA degree	Unemployed	Divorced	Dublin	Dublin	US /Italy/Spain	1989-2003
Peter	Male	43	MA degree	Accountant	Married	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US Norway	1995-2004
Siobhan	Female	37	BA degree	Insurance	Single	Tipperary	Dublin	US	1995-2005
Stella	Female	40	MA degree	Writer	Divorced	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US /Greece	1996-2005
Tony	Male	42	MA degree	Academic	Married	Galway	Galway	UK/US /France/Japan	1996-2003
Willie	Male	44	Second level	Civil servant	Cohabiting	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US	1987-2006
Winnifred	Female	36	Second level	Unemployed	Married	Dublin	Dublin	UK/US	1994-2002

Appendix V: Participants' multiple definitions of the meaning of home

	A I a n	A n d y	A n n e	B r i d	B e r n i e	C o l m a c	C o r m a c	D a n	D i a r m u i d	D y l a n	E l a i n e	E l i z a b e t h	F i n t a n	F i o n a	H a r y	J e n n i f e r	J o h a n n a	J o e	J o s e p h	K a r t e	M a r i a	M a r t i n	M a r y	M a u r e e n	N o e l	O l i v e	P a d r a i g	P a t r i c k	P a u l i n e r	P e t e r	S i o b h a n	S t e l l a	T o n y	W i l l i e d	W i n n i f r e d			
Dimension of location																																						
Sedentarist homes –'Home as haven'/Ontological security	X		X	X				X	X	X		X			X	X				X			X	X	X						X				X	X		
'Bricks and mortar'	X			X							X						X					X		X	X							X	X		X			
Grounded, authentic experience in a fixed place			X	X		X		X						X						X						X		X			X					X		
Socio-territorial definition –family and friends in place			X	X		X		X								X		X		X						X		X	X							X	X	
Community, neighbourhood interactions in discreet location			X			X														X						X		X	X			X					X	
Untethering home –Multiple homes 'here' and 'there'	X	X		X			X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X				X		X				X			X					X	X	X	
Dislocates expectation of return-as-homecoming, of home as foundational place							X				X		X		X										X				X									
Globalabode –'at home in the world'									X																	X			X									
Positive experience of being 'in place' 'here' and 'there'	X	X		X			X		X	X	X				X	X	X				X		X						X						X	X	X	
Ambiguous experience of being 'out of place' both 'here' and 'there'		X					X	X							X	X					X						X		X							X		
Need to actively make/carve out home in various places	X				X			X	X			X		X						X	X				X			X	X						X	X		X
Dimension of identification: Fixed identification with home –authentic feelings of core self	X	X	X		X			X	X					X					X			X		X							X	X	X		X	X		
National identity related to bounded meaning of home		X							X	X											X					X				X							X	
Destabilizing identity– Crisis of identification upon homecoming		X											X	X						X							X		X							X		
Disrupts expectation of return to settled, bounded home and identity	X		X					X				X	X				X				X				X			X									X	
Hybrid homes –Complex, fluid identities 'here' and 'there'	X	X		X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X				X	X			X	X		X	X			X				X	X	
Hybrid, syncretic homes experienced as a positive identity attribute	X	X		X			X	X	X	X					X	X	X				X	X			X	X		X	X			X				X	X	
Hybridity experienced as ambivalent, anxiety-inducing							X		X	X						X				X	X				X										X	X		
Dynamic and emergent model of identification with home –need for identity work	X						X	X		X					X								X		X				X			X		X	X		X	
Identify unexpectedly with home as 'return migrants'															X		X					X	X						X	X					X	X		
Dimension of belonging																																						
Labelled by others as the 'same' –reinforces belonging to home			X			X								X						X						X	X				X		X				X	
Categorized by dominant others as the 'same' as 'us' –causes pressures to conform							X		X			X							X				X		X				X					X				
Categorized by dominant others as 'different' from 'us' –causes feelings of exclusion from home					X		X		X	X											X		X		X	X			X		X				X			
Contest others' normative ascriptions of belonging	X	X									X								X			X			X	X			X						X	X		
Both 'sameness' and 'difference' construct alternate normative model of belonging	X	X	X								X					X				X					X				X		X				X	X		